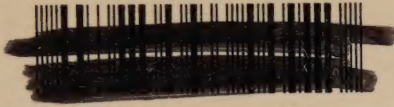


CHRONICLES OF
THE BIRMINGHAM
COMMERCIAL SOCIETY
AND
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
A.D. 1783—1913.

BI 0526836 2



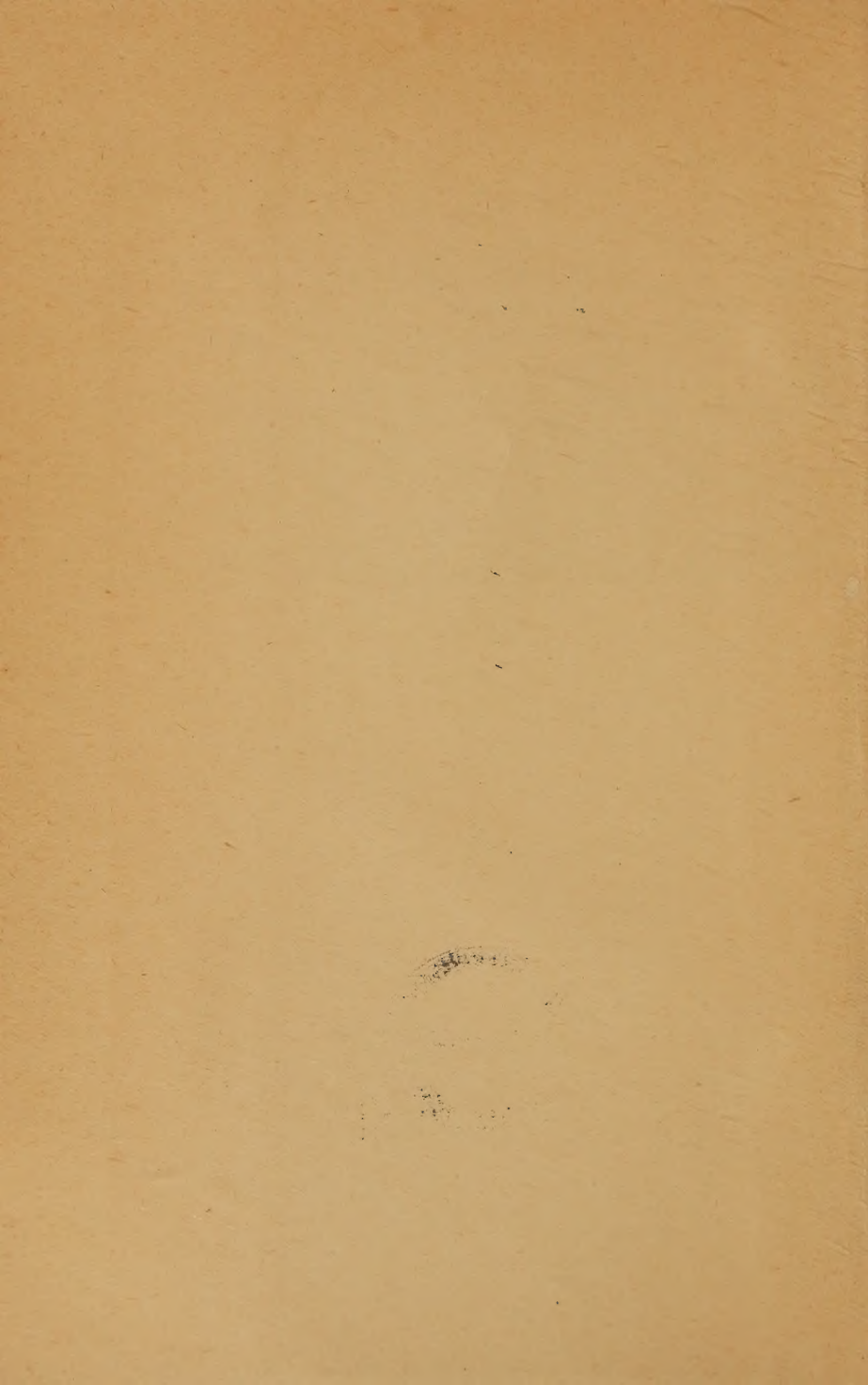
£18.00

83909

Gov.

DATE DUE FOR RETURN

26. FEB 88.



CHRONICLES
OF THE
Birmingham
Chamber of Commerce

A.D. 1813—1913,

AND OF

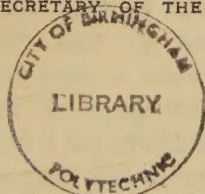
The Birmingham Commercial Society

A.D. 1783—1812.

BY

G. HENRY WRIGHT, F.C.I.S.

(SECRETARY OF THE CHAMBER).



TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE

CENTENARY CELEBRATION

21st July, 1913.

CHRONICLES

Birmingham

Chamber of Commerce

A.D. 1811-1812

1812

The Birmingham Commercial Society

A.D. 1811-1812

C. HENRY WRIGHT F.C.S.

1812

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY	
Book No.	05268362
Subject No.	942.496 Wri

PREFACE.

THE object of the present volume is to place on permanent record an account of some of the work accomplished by the Chamber of Commerce during the last century. It is not given to many voluntary bodies—except, perhaps, those founded by means of permanent endowments—to endure for the long span of one hundred years, and yet, if historical records are to be relied upon, the Chamber of Commerce might reasonably have elected to celebrate its Centenary thirty years ago, seeing that in the year 1783 there was established here a Commercial Society, with functions similar to those since performed by the Chamber of Commerce. In the exercise of its discretion, however, the Chamber elected to celebrate its Centenary on the 21st July, 1913, being one hundred years from the date when the Chamber was founded under that name.

The writer had hoped that even in the infrequent intervals of a busy official life it would have been possible to construct a history of the activities of the Chamber, but the demands upon his time in regard to current affairs have been so persistent that he has been compelled to relinquish that desire and to offer, in the place of a history, properly so called, a series of chapters illustrative of the life and work of the Chamber. Much research has necessarily had to be undertaken even for the preparation of such a work as this, but the writer is fully aware of its many defects. He will, however, be quite contented if his efforts have sufficed to throw some light upon the past and to interest those who may chance to read this volume, whether directly interested in commercial and industrial affairs or not.

BIRMINGHAM,

1ST NOVEMBER,^y 1913.

CHRONICLES

OF THE

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

A.D. 1813—1913.

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT BIRMINGHAM.

For us who live in the twentieth century, when national and local government may reasonably be said to have reached an advanced stage of completeness and efficiency, and when organisations of all classes of the community—all of them working with more or less effect—simply abound, it is interesting to go back to the earlier days before the foundation of the Birmingham Commercial Committee, and to inquire as to the conditions which then prevailed. In 1783, when the Commercial Committee was formed, there were, broadly stated, three sets of authorities—the Justices to keep the peace and to punish crime; the Court Leet to look to markets, nuisances and other matters belonging to the Lord of the Manor, or interfering with his rights; and the Churchwardens, who transacted the affairs of the Church and Parish, convened vestry meetings for town purposes generally, and for the election of surveyors. There is no need to go into detail with regard to the proceedings of these authorities, for the mere statement already given is sufficient to enable anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with the history of local government to draw a comparison between the conditions prevailing then and now.

In his history of Birmingham, written in the eighteenth century, Mr. W. Hutton, F.A.S., said that, except for half-a-dozen pages in Dugdale, he knew of no author who had professedly treated of Birmingham.

Early
Government
of the City.

Hutton's
History.

None of the histories he had seen bestowed upon it more than a few lines, in which, he said : " We are sure to be treated with the noise of hammers and anvils, as if the historian thought us a race of dealers in thunder, lightning, and wind, or infernals puffing in blast and smoke."

He then quoted the oft-repeated extract from the celebrated writer, Leland, who was employed by Henry VIII. to form an Itinerary of Britain, viz. :—

Leland's
Itinerary.

" I came through a pretty street as ever I entered, into Birmingham town. This street, as I remember, is called Dirtey (now Deritend). In it dwells smiths and cutlers, and there is a brook that divides this street from Birmingham and hamlet or member belonging to the Parish thereby. There is at the end of Dirtey a proper chapel and mansion house of tymbre (the moat) hard on the ripe (bank) as the brook runneth down ; and as I went through the ford, by the bridge, the water came down on the right hand and a few miles below goeth into Tame. This brook, above Dirtey, breaketh in two arms that a little beneath the bridge close again. This brook riseth, as some say, four or five miles above Birmingham, toward Black-hills.

" The beauty of Birmingham, a good market-town in the extreme parts of Warwickshire, is one street going up alonge, almost from left ripe of the brook, up a meane hill, by the length of a quarter of a mile. I saw but one Parish Church in the town.

" There be many smithes in the town that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tools and many loriners that make bittes and a great many naylor, so that a great part of the town is maintained by smithes, who have their iron and sea-cole out of Staffordshire."

Hollow-ways

Speaking of the long existence of the place, Hutton said that the very roads that proceeded from Birmingham gave additional indication of her great antiquity and commercial influence.

“Where any of these roads,” he continued, “lead up an eminence, they were worn by the long practice of ages into deep holloways, some of them twelve or fourteen yards below the surface of the banks with which they were once even and so narrow as to admit only one passenger.”

According to Hutton, though modern industry, assisted by various Turnpike Acts, had widened the upper part and filled up the lower, yet these holloways were all visible in the early days and were traceable even in the days when he wrote his history.

“One of these subterranean passages, in part filled up, would convey its name to posterity in that of a street called Holloway Head. . . . Dale End, once a deep road, has the same derivation. Another at Summer Hill, in the Dudley Road, altered in 1753. A remarkable one is also between the ‘Salutation’ and the turnpike in the Wolverhampton Road. A fifth at the top of Walmer Lane, changed into its present form in 1764. . . . All the way from Dale End to Duddeston, of which Coleshill Street now makes a part and Mile End another, was sunk five or six feet, though nearly upon a flat, till filled up in 1756 by Act of Parliament, but the most singular is that between Deritend and Camp Hill, on the way to Stratford, which was fifty-eight feet deep, and is even now many yards below the banks; yet the seniors of the last age took a pleasure in telling us they could remember when it would have buried a wagon load of hay beneath its present surface.”

The ancient centre of Birmingham, according to Hutton, seems, from the number of streets pointing to it, to have been the Old Cross, which stood near the Bull Ring, and which was built early in the eighteenth century, and appeared to have served a three-fold purpose, viz.: a shelter for market people on rainy days; a place where the Court Leet and meetings for other public business could be held; and a clock tower.

The Centre
of
Birmingham

“Wherever the narrow end of a street enters a great thoroughfare it indicates antiquity. This is the case with Philip Street, Spiceal Street, Park Street, and Moor Street, which not only incline to the centre above mentioned, but terminate with their narrow ends into the Grand Passage. These streets are confined at the entrance and widen as they proceed. The narrow ends were formed with the main street at first and were not intended for streets themselves. As the town increased, other blunders of the same kind were committed. Witness the Gateway late at the East end of New Street, the two ends of Worcester Street, Smallbrook Street, Cannon Street, New Meeting Street, and Bull Street. It is easy to see which end of a street was formed first; perhaps the South end of Moor Street is two thousand years older than the North.”

Hutton's
Imagination.

Then follows an amusing flight of imagination well worthy of Hutton, which he clothes in the following sentences :—

“Every word in the English language carries an idea. When a word strikes the ear, the mind immediately forms a picture which represents it as faithfully as the looking-glass does the face. Thus when the word Birmingham occurs a superb picture instantly expands in the mind which is best explained by the other words—grand, populous, extensive, active, commercial, and humane. This painting is an exact counterpart of the word at this day, but it does not correspond with its appearance in the days of the Ancient Britons. We must, therefore, for a moment, detach the idea from the word.”

Ancient
Housing
Conditions.

With this idea of detachment he asks the reader to suppose this centre (*i.e.*, the Old Cross) surrounded with less than one hundred straggling huts, without order, which he ventures to dignify with the name of houses

“built of timber, the interstices wattled with sticks and plastered with mud, covered with thatch,

boards, or sods, none of them higher than the ground storey ; the meaner sort only one room, which served for three uses—shop, kitchen, and lodging room ; the door for two, it admitted the people and the light. The better sort, two rooms, and some three for work for the kitchen, and for rest, all three in a line, and sometimes fronting the street.”

There was evidently a need in those early days for a Housing Committee, or some other Committee of that kind, but, as Hutton says, “Success which ever waits on industry produced a gradual but very slow increase.” He adds that perhaps a thousand years elapsed without adding another fifty houses.

Concluding his account of Ancient Birmingham, Hutton says :—

“If we survey Birmingham in the twelfth century we shall find her crowded with timber, within and without ; her streets dirty and narrow, but much trodden. . . . Her houses were mean and low but few reaching higher than one storey, perhaps none more than two, composed of wood and plaster. She was a stranger to brick. Her public buildings consisted solely of one—the Church. If we behold her in the fourteenth century we shall observe her private buildings multiplied more than improved ; her narrow streets by trespass become narrower ; her public buildings increased to four—two in the town and two at a distance. . . .”

CHAPTER II.

MODERN BIRMINGHAM (EARLY PERIOD).

Hutton says that the ancient and modern state of Birmingham must be divided at the restoration of Charles II., because, though she had before held a con-
Division
between
Ancient and
Modern

siderable degree of eminence, yet at this period the curious arts began to take root and were cultivated by the hand of genius.

“Building leases also began to take effect, extension followed, and numbers of people crowded upon each other as into a paradise.”

He gives it as his view that at the Restoration Birmingham probably consisted of about fifteen streets, nine hundred houses, and five thousand four hundred and seventy-two inhabitants. In 1700 the number of streets was about twenty-eight, the number of houses two thousand five hundred and four, and the inhabitants fifteen thousand and thirty-two. From 1700 to 1731 there were added about twenty-three streets, one thousand two hundred and fifteen houses, and eight thousand two hundred and fifty inhabitants. From 1741 to 1781 “Birmingham seems to have acquired the amazing augmentation of seventy-one streets, four thousand one hundred and seventy-two houses, and twenty five thousand and thirty-two inhabitants.” Between the years 1791 and 1808 Birmingham appears to have suffered from a variety of conflicting causes, for she seems to have made little or no progress. The riots which took place in 1791 were soon afterwards followed by a very expensive war, which added many millions to our National Debt. These, with a stagnation of trade, and the very high prices of provisions in 1800, occasioned by bad harvests, when flour sold at six shillings per stone of fourteen pounds, and other things in proportion, caused a decrease in the above years instead of an increase. Hutton says:—

Disastrous
Depressions.

“Many thousands of able-bodied and industrious mechanics entered the army and their masters the Gazette, and one thousand eight hundred and fifty houses were left without tenants in 1808, many of which were completely demolished, and tiles, timber, glass, lead, and even bricks, to the very foundation, were carried off.”

It was about this time that the Chamber of Commerce was established, and in 1811—two years previous to the foundation of the Chamber—Birmingham had two

hundred and sixty streets, sixteen thousand and ninety-six houses, and a population of eighty-five thousand seven hundred and fifty-five.

CHAPTER III.

THE COMMERCIAL COMMITTEE FORMED.

Thirty years before the Chamber of Commerce was 1783 founded there was established a Commercial Committee. Commercial Committee. On the 15th July, 1783, as a result of the commercial part of the community having begun to realise the importance of organisation, a meeting was held at which a Committee was appointed to prepare proposals for the establishment and regulation of a General Commercial Committee, in order to lay the same before the Town at a future meeting." No time was lost in the preparation of these proposals, for we find that a Town's meeting was held at the Birmingham Hotel on the 12th August, 1783, under the presidency of Samuel Garbett, Esq., one of the leading manufacturers of the town, who was included in the first body of Street Commissioners named in the Commissioners first Act of Parliament (Geo. III. c. 98). At this meeting a series of eleven resolutions was passed unanimously—(a) approving of the proposals for the establishment of the Committee; (b) expressing the opinion that it was highly expedient to establish such a Committee to watch over and conduct the public interest of the town and neighbourhood; (c) providing that not less than sixty, nor more than one hundred, persons should be elected at the meeting, to be regarded as a public body, established for the purpose above mentioned; and that all future applications to Parliament as to administrations for public purposes should be entrusted to them; (d) stipulating that the Committee should not decide upon any proposals made to them except at a meeting called by public advertisement in the Birmingham

newspapers, signed by at least five of them, and stating the business intended to be considered, except in cases of real emergency on the written order of seven members ; (e) fixing a quorum ; (f) providing for the keeping of minutes ; (g) making provision for the filling up of vacancies ; (h) empowering the Committee to make bye-laws and instructing them to correspond with other Commercial Committees that may have been established and in particular to encourage a " coincidence and connection " with Wolverhampton, Walsall, and their neighbourhood ; (i) naming one hundred persons (whose names, unfortunately, have not been preserved) to form the first Committee ; (j) ordering the proceedings of the meeting to be inserted in both the Birmingham newspapers ; and (k) thanking the chairman for the very able and candid manner in which he had conducted the proceedings.

Other
Commercial
Committees.

So far as can be ascertained, the only other Commercial Committees established in England in or about the year 1783 were those of Leeds, Halifax, and Exeter. The Manchester Committee was not formed until 1794. There were, apparently, no similar bodies in Wolverhampton, Walsall, or Dudley, or any of the neighbouring towns. It is obvious, therefore, that the Commercial Community of Birmingham were among the first to realise that the time had arrived for a form of combination or organisation to be created which had not hitherto existed. Subsequent events proved that the Birmingham Commercial Committee was formed not a moment too soon, as, before the close of the eighteenth century, movements—political, industrial, and commercial—of the most momentous importance were going on, which needed the active attention of a body established for the purpose of watching over and protecting the interests of the business community.

CHAPTER IV.

1784—1785.

Having regard to the intensely interesting work performed by the General Commercial Committee during the comparatively short period of its existence, it is unfortunate that its original records are not available. The writer has searched for them in many directions, but in vain, and it is probable that they have long been destroyed. We are, therefore, greatly indebted to the researches of John Alfred Langford, who, in his useful work, entitled: "A Century of Birmingham Life or Chronicle of Local Events, 1741 to 1841," gave permanency of record to much of the work accomplished by the Committee.

Langford tells us that in the year 1784 the Commercial Committee were "exceedingly busy." On the 10th February in that year a meeting of the principal inhabitants of the town, convened by the Committee, was held at the Birmingham Hotel, for the purpose of considering the presentation of an address to his Majesty the King. It was moved:—

Address to
H.M. The
King.

"That the sense of the meeting be taken respecting the propriety of an Address,"

and, on this being seconded, it was resolved, after a debate of some length, by a majority of 98 to 29—

"That it was proper to address the King."

Seven gentlemen were then appointed to withdraw from the meeting and prepare an address, which, upon their return, was read by the chairman (Mr. Samuel Garbett); and after a "trifling alteration had been made in the title," adopted by the meeting by a vote of 101 to 4. After the thanks of the meeting had been voted to the Commercial Committee an adjournment took place, in order to allow time for a fair and proper transcript of the address for signature. The meeting was resumed in the afternoon, when the thanks of it were unanimously given to the chairman "for his candour and impartiality

in conducting the business of the day." The address remained at the hotel for the signature of the inhabitants until the 14th February, 1784, when it was sent to London to be presented to his Majesty by Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., and Sir George Shuckburgh, Bart.—both of them Knights of the Shire—who had expressed a "great readiness" to carry up the address to the throne.

Langford does not vouchsafe to us the purpose or the subject of the loyal address, but it is sufficient for us to know that in the first year of its existence the predecessor of the Chamber of Commerce occupied a sufficiently important position in the country to enable it to approach the throne with its expressions of loyalty and prayers. It is interesting here to record that the two last occasions on which the Commercial Community—in this case through the Chamber of Commerce—approached the King was in the year 1909, when his Majesty King Edward VII.—in the last year of his reign—visited Birmingham with Queen Alexandra for the purpose of opening the new University Buildings at Bournbrook, and in 1913, when a Loyal Address was presented to His Majesty King George V. on the celebration of the Centenary of the founding of the Chamber.

Politics.

Langford says of the Commercial Committee:—"Nor did they refrain from politics." A meeting was called for April 2nd, 1784, to "consider what measures may be proper for them to adopt in consequence of the dissolution of Parliament." In the twentieth century it would be most unusual for a special meeting to be called for such a purpose, but in the eighteenth century there was not the same clean-cut division between one party and another. The meeting of the Commercial Committee referred to was convened by means of an advertisement, signed by the Executive Committee, whose names, says Langford, are worth preserving. They were as follows:—

Edward Palmer	Samuel Glover	George Humphreys
Henry Perkins	Samuel Garbett	John Rickards
William Welch	William Russell	John Startin
John Startin	Thomas Ingram	William Turner.

This meeting was adjourned until April 6th, but there is no report either of the business done or the resolutions

passed. Langford observes naively :—" Perhaps this was unnecessary, as the county returned their old members, who, on the 7th, return their thanks for the renewal of the confidence of their electors."

On January 25th, 1785, a meeting was held to consider matters of great importance to the manufacturers of the town and neighbourhood. The meeting was adjourned until February 1st, but in the meantime the following advertisement was published in the local papers, under date January 31st :—

Seducing of
Manufac-
tures and
Workers.

" A REWARD.

"The Commercial Committee do hereby offer a reward of fifty guineas for such intelligence as will convict any person of having attempted to seduce a manufacturer to leave this town or neighbourhood to go to work in foreign countries. The reward to be paid on conviction of the offender. And the Committee have also determined to apply to the King's ministers to outlaw such British subjects who do now, or may in future, work at the trade in foreign states to the prejudice of the manufacturers of this country."

At the same meetings the Commercial Committee dealt exhaustively with the question of taxation, and addressed representations containing their views to the Knights of the Shire for the Counties of Warwick and Stafford and to "other noblemen and members of Parliament." The following is a full account of the entry ordered to be inserted in the Journal of the proceedings of the Committee :—

Taxation.

"This Committee having, with anxiety, observed the various methods devised to raise a public revenue in such a manner as materially to impede the improvement and extent of manufactures designed both for home consumption and foreign markets ; it is, therefore, with great pleasure that they observe, and do entirely concur in, the sentiments expressed in the resolutions published by the very respectable quarterly meeting of Ironmasters and others concerned in the making of iron in Great Britain and

Taxes on
Manufac-
tures.

of the manufacturers of iron in the several Counties of Salop, Worcester, Stafford, and Warwick, held at Stourbridge, in the County of Worcester, on the 7th of last month, viz. :—That it is highly expedient for those who have the good of their country at heart to express their sentiments freely on those commercial subjects on which its population and riches most essentially depend ; that the population and riches of this kingdom essentially depend on its manufactures, and taxes laid upon them are impolitic ; that property acquired by trade and manufactures is a fit object of taxation ; but not the manufactures themselves.

“ In concurrence with these sentiments the Committee are unanimously of opinion :—

- (1) “ That manufactures and commerce should only be considered as a means of acquiring that real property which is the proper object of taxation.
- (2) “ That property, while exposed to the extreme uncertainty which it is necessarily subject to, while engaged in manufacture and commerce, cannot be justly deemed substantial until it is withdrawn from those dangers.
- (3) “ That every tax on manufactures, or on the raw materials employed in them, (whether imported from abroad or the produce of our own country) is impolitic, as it tends to depress or crush the ardour of invention, and those adventurous attempts after the improvement and new discovery to which many of the British manufactures owe that superiority which they have attained. The operation of such taxes has been extremely prejudicial to many of our manufactures, some of which they have greatly injured, and in other cases have frustrated important plans for new branches of manufactures.
- (4) “ That, in general, every Excise law is irreconcilable with the freedom and secrecy every manufacturer has a natural right to demand, in his own workshops and in the exercise of his business, and they subject him to numerous inconveniences, are

Excise Laws
objection-
able.

an encouragement to smugglers, while they oppress the fair trader; and that by the frequency of taking oaths, which it is the deponents' interest to falsify, they lessen the reverence for that sacred ceremony, and tend to sap the foundations of moral honesty.

- (5) "That it is the opinion of this meeting that a spirit of rivalling and supplanting our manufactures is now operating in various parts of Europe, to a degree truly alarming; and that our present laws are found ineffectual for preventing our ingenious tools being exported, and our most expert and valuable workmen being inveigled away to other countries, where raw materials and other necessities for manufactures are exempted from duty. Export of Tools.
- (7) "That it is the opinion of this meeting that the present times open a new era in the commercial world, and that many circumstances render it necessary not only to remove all taxes upon manufactures, but likewise to hold out every possible encouragement to commercial people to continue to hazard their property in trade. Need for encouragement.
- (8) "That the impediments, difficulties, and various prohibitions our commerce meets with in almost every quarter of the globe requires the early notice of the administration, and that the public interest will very materially suffer if speedy and effectual attention is not granted; and as it is not probable that the gentlemen who devised the taxes were acquainted with these difficulties or were sensible of the encouragement given to manufacturers in foreign countries or with the inducements that are continually offered (and with some success) to entice artists to leave this kingdom—it is therefore Impediments to Trade.

"*Resolved*—That in order as far as in us lies, to counteract the opinion which has long prevailed that manufactures are proper objects of taxation, it is become necessary to correspond with the Commercial Committees Resolution.

and eminent merchants and manufacturers in different parts of the kingdom in order to represent such particulars to Government, respecting exports to foreign countries and to the manufactures which are established there, as may be thought most effectual for the protection of British manufacturers in general; and also to represent that mines of coal, iron, copper, tin, lead, calamine and clay, together with manufactures, very much contribute to the rank this country bears among nations; and that it is essential for persons who are most intimately acquainted with all the connections relative thereto, and most immediately interested in the prosperity of mines, manufactures, and commerce, to form some mode of corresponding in order to remonstrate against injudicious taxes upon any articles of export, and thereby to afford such information to Ministry as may be of great importance to our commerce with foreigners.”

These minutes were recommended to the Committee of Correspondence, who were advised to take an opportunity of declaring in the most explicit manner, that the members of the Commercial Committee would most cheerfully pay any taxes upon their expenditure, but earnestly praying that they may not be impeded in the means by which “we honestly and industriously enrich ourselves and our country and promote population.”

Commercial
Relations
with
Ireland.

Some idea of the activity of the Commercial Committee may be obtained when it is observed that seven days after the meeting at which the above recited resolutions were passed, another meeting was held, to which the principal traders of the town and neighbourhood were invited, as well as the merchants and manufacturers. to express their sentiments upon “the commercial relations between this kingdom and Ireland,” and other matters of importance to this manufacturing country. Delegates were appointed at this meeting, and another was held on the 18th February, 1785, to approve of a

petition, which was subsequently presented to the House of Commons by Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., one of the members for the County of Warwick.

In the preamble to the petition it was observed that there were then under consideration certain resolutions of the House of Lords and Commons of Ireland, which the Commercial Committee understood were intended to form the basis of a lasting Treaty of Commerce between Great Britain and that "Kingdom." The view was expressed that a treaty in the terms set forth in the said resolutions would be highly detrimental to the trade and manufactures of Great Britain in general, and to those of Birmingham and neighbourhood in particular. Then follows the somewhat startling proposition that, unless great alterations were made in the revenue laws of Great Britain and Ireland, the latter country might, more effectually than any other, rival the manufactures of Great Britain. It was also stated that the duties which were law in Ireland upon some of our manufactures operated as a bounty, and induced workmen to leave Great Britain and settle there. The Commercial Committee added that they had no doubt "but this emigration will much increase from this town and neighbourhood if the resolutions of the Irish Parliament should be confirmed in Great Britain without essential alterations."

The attitude adopted by the Commercial Committee was not merely a negative one, for they stated that their apprehensions would, in some degree, be removed if all articles which were the natural growth, product, or manufacture of either country were allowed to be imported into the other duty free, or as an alternative if a duty should be thought to be necessary, it were imposed in such a manner as to affect *ad valorem* all articles which are the natural growth, product, or manufacture of either country when imported into the other.

After calling attention to the fact that articles the natural growth, product, or manufacture of Great Britain were charged with heavy duties when imported into Ireland, whilst linen, which was the principal manufacture of Ireland was imported into Great Britain duty free, the petitioners

Committee's
Proposal.

Import
Duties.

express the opinion that the duties on the importation of articles from foreign states, "and on bar iron in particular," should be the same in both countries, "and as the duty on bar iron imported into this kingdom cannot be reduced without great injury to the making of it at home, which it is the particular interest of this country to encourage," it was urged that the duty on this article as well as on all others, when imported into Ireland should be equal to the duties in Great Britain.

Postpone-
of Treaty
urged.

The concluding paragraph of the petition was as follows :—

"That upon the whole, your petitioners, being convinced of the many difficulties in which a commercial arrangement with Ireland is involved, and of the very great importance it must be of to both countries to have it settled on a well-digested plan, as may tend to increase the wealth, population, and happiness of both kingdoms, think it essentially necessary that more time should be allowed for mature consideration; and though they have the highest opinion of the integrity and ability of the Minister who introduced this business, they conceive it to be their duty humbly to pray that the Commercial Treaty between this kingdom and Ireland may be left open till the next session; or that this honourable House will grant such other relief as to its wisdom shall seem meet."

The Union
advocated

On the 1st April, 1785, another meeting of the Committee was held, at which the question of the commercial relations between Great Britain and Ireland was again considered. The measure having passed the Commons, a further meeting was held on the 7th June, when a petition to the House of Lords was adopted and a memorandum containing the substance of the petition ordered to be delivered to each peer. This petition was similar to that presented to the Commons, but it contained also the following striking paragraphs :—

"That from observations made by the merchants and manufacturers of this place, in the course of their transactions, there is reason to believe it is impossible for human prudence to foresee or obviate the many

important and perplexing circumstances which may arise, in consequence of any unalterable regulations that can be settled for commercial contingencies; and it is humbly apprehended that the only expedient which can firmly and lastingly unite the interests of the two kingdoms in commercial matters is a complete union of the two states.

“That if the resolutions of the House of Commons, relative to a lasting treaty of commerce between Great Britain and Ireland, should pass into a law, contrary to the general sentiments of the manufacturing part of the nation, and of those who, upon experimental knowledge of trade, are most likely to foresee the effects, there is great reason to apprehend the consequence will be injurious to our commerce and fatal to our internal peace.”

CHAPTER V.

1786—1787.

Langford says that the Commercial Committee opened the new year with fresh efforts for the benefit of trade. Exportation
of Tools. On the 13th January, 1786, a meeting was held to take into consideration the necessity of applying for an “amendment to the Act of last session to prevent the exportation of tools” and the propriety of asking for the introduction of a specification of the several and particular sorts of tools and implements which they had been accustomed to export (and which it was conceived they might continue to do) without injury to the country, and also a specification of the tools it was thought prudent to prohibit. Another item of business was that of deliberating upon a plan to secure the supporters of it with a constant supply of copper and brass upon as good terms as the nature of the trade would permit, and thereby effectually prevent their being liable to the effects of future

monopolies and the great inconveniences which the neighbourhood had suffered from the want of security.

Trade
Secrecy.

On the 23rd January, 1786, the Committee inserted an advertisement in the public press to the effect that the manufacturers of Birmingham having suffered very "great inconveniences" and other "bad consequences" of the most serious kind, they found themselves under the necessity of acquainting the public that they had, therefore, resolved not to admit any strangers into their workshops in the future, and hoped that no person would resent being refused a favour, the granting of which had been found to be detrimental to the town. It is interesting also to record that the advertisement contained an intimation similar to that issued a year previously to the effect that fifty guineas reward would be given by the Commercial Committee for such information as would convict any person of offering to induce a manufacturer in hardware "to leave this town or neighbourhood to work at his trade upon the Continent of Europe."

Supply of
Copper and
Brass.

A meeting of the Commercial Committee was held on the 31st January, 1786, to examine and consider a plan for securing a constant supply of copper and brass which was devised by that great captain of industry—Matthew Boulton. Consumers of metal and other traders of the town and neighbourhood were invited to the meeting—a commendable practice which seemed to have been common in those days, when the membership of the Committee was perhaps somewhat limited. The object of the scheme or plan was to secure to its supporters a constant supply of copper upon as good terms as the nature of the trade would permit; and it appeared from the details that a capital of £36,000 was deemed to be necessary to establish that very important object. Matthew Boulton also suggested that of this sum £24,000 should be possessed by persons in the town and neighbourhood. It is evident that the plan was favourably received, for at the meeting quite a number of persons expressed a willingness to engage therein by signing their names to an undertaking to advance £13,300, provided, on further examination, the plan "appeared to their satisfaction." It was, therefore, resolved:—"That the report be left with Mr. Peel, at

“ Mr. Boulton’s warehouse, at New-Hall, until Tuesday
 “ next, at ten o’clock in the forenoon, that any gentleman
 “ may have an opportunity of perusing the same and
 “ adding his name thereto for any sum of not less than
 “ £100, and that there be a meeting at this place on
 “ Tuesday next at 10 o’clock in the forenoon, in order to
 “ consider upon settling terms for general satisfaction ;
 “ after which gentlemen may engage to advance or decline
 “ advancing the sums they may have set opposite to their
 “ names.”

On the 31st January, 1786, Mr. Samuel Garbett, the chairman of the Committee, acquainted the Commercial Committee with the fact that, at the request of the principal exporters of the town he had twice waited upon Mr. Pitt to represent to him some of the difficulties that had lately been put upon the introduction of Birmingham wares into France, Germany, Portugal, and other countries, and the means that had been adopted to procure various sorts of tools for the use of “ artists ” who had emigrated from this country to work at their trades in foreign states. He added that he had also informed the Minister that unless a bounty was granted upon the exportation of ironwares, a great part of that trade would be lost to Britain ; and that the duty which had been laid upon silver wares would certainly deprive the town of a manufacture which had a “ fair prospect of being considerable,” especially if we were allowed to work silver of “ two of the same standards as were used in foreign parts.” He further stated that he had firmly declared to Mr. Pitt that the introducing of Excisemen into any manufactories was a material if not the most effectual bar to the “ spirit of improvement.”

Representa-
tions to
Government

Bounties on
Exports.

Duty on
Silver Wares

Excise
Inspection.

Concluding his statement Mr. Garbett said that Mr. Pitt not only listened to him with great attention, but gave instant proof of his inclination to serve the commercial interests of the community, and desired that Mr. Garbett would assure the merchants and manufacturers of Birmingham that he would always be ready to attend to any representations they might lay before him, “ as he considered the manufactures of our country as objects

Mr. Pitt’s
Assurance.

of great magnitude," and as entitled to his best endeavours for their support.

Commercial
Relations
with
Ireland.

Upon Mr. Garbett's report appropriate resolutions were passed, and then other subjects were dealt with. For instance, the institution of a General Chamber of Manufacturers in London was "highly" approved, and the Commercial Committee, with becoming modesty after their own earnest efforts to which the writer has previously referred, expressed the view that it was undoubtedly due to the industry and perseverance of the members of that Chamber, in collecting and laying before Parliament so much authentic and decisive information, that the "Irish propositions" did not pass in their original form. The resolution went on to speak of the ruin, happily averted, with which those propositions threatened many important branches of the manufacturing industries of Great Britain.

Hurtful
Legislation.

The resolution regarding the London General Chamber of Manufacturers was very lengthy and of a most comprehensive character. It went on to say that it was through the efforts of that body that "some stop" was put to the extension of the Excise laws, "whose baneful influence proved fatal to some of our valuable manufactures" and hurtful in a very high degree to all those over which they extended; and the opinion of the meeting was expressed unanimously to the effect that it would be a happy circumstance for the nation in general if the remonstrances and facts produced by the members of that Chamber should induce the legislature to revise all those laws by which the manufacturers were distressed, and to adopt such measures as would protect and encourage many valuable branches of trade that would otherwise be lost to the country.

Unity is
Strength.

Before the close of the meeting to which the writer has last referred, another very long resolution was passed in which the opinion was expressed that

"the present conjuncture of affairs peculiarly demands the firm union, the serious attention, and the vigorous and judicious exertions of the whole body of British manufacturers; for our manufactures still continue burthened by a load of taxation and its consequent

restraint at home; while heavy duties and prohibitions now meet them in many parts of Europe where we have formerly enjoyed a comparatively free trade."

The resolution went on to assert that foreign countries not only discouraged the sale of British goods in their Dominions, but, "with the diligence and perseverance of private tradesmen," endeavoured to establish similar manufactures in their own countries. To protect and preserve our "art and artists," and to avert the dangers which in "numerous shapes surround us" demanded, the resolution continued, the attention of every eminent manufacturer, but it would only be when acting in conjunction with others that he could expect his grievances would be attended to. Then come the following words, which are as pertinent to-day:—

"The voice of the whole will be heard, while the complaint of individuals, or the clamours of the manufacturers in a single branch would be disregarded."

For this reason the meeting hoped that the General Chamber in London—a body which was formed apparently on the lines of a Federation or Association of Commercial Committees or Associations—would receive from the town that support which so valuable an institution merited. And it was stated that, as the Birmingham Committee considered themselves parties to the institution of the General Chamber, they stood pledged to contribute their portion of the expense incurred. It was, therefore, decided to collect subscriptions for the General Chamber, and liberal amounts were immediately promised and a deputation appointed to solicit further contributions.

Shortly afterwards there occurred a serious difference between the Commercial Committee and the General Chamber of Manufacturers in London with regard to the proposed Commercial Treaty with France, which the former supported and the latter opposed. On the 27th March, 1787, a meeting of the Commercial Committee was held, with Matthew Boulton (of Soho fame) in the chair, when it was resolved unanimously that the recent proceedings of the General Chamber of Manufacturers,

Early
Federation.

Commercial
Treaty with
France.

in presenting a petition to Parliament objecting to the Commercial Treaty with France and in "publishing sundry resolutions disapproving of the same," were highly injudicious ; that the said proceedings were in no way authorised by the Committee, nor by any delegate from the manufacturers of Birmingham ; that the publication of the debates in the General Chamber of Manufacturers was exceedingly impolitic, and likely to prove prejudicial to the interests of the country ; that the dissension which had prevailed in the General Chamber had tended to lessen the "respectability" of that valuable institution ; that the constitution of the General Chamber should be "new modelled and such regulations made as may tend to prevent such conduct in the future, and also to prevent improper persons from being admitted members of that Chamber ; and that until such regulations were adopted the Committee would decline to send any delegate to the General Chamber, and would not consider that it represented in any way the manufacturers of 'this town and neighbourhood.'"

It is somewhat interesting to record that although the Commercial Committee entered a protest against the publication of the debates of the General Chamber of Manufacturers, they nevertheless directed the publication of the above resolutions in the Birmingham newspapers and in two or three of the London papers.

CHAPTER VI.

1790.

Quarrel and
Division.

The year 1790 was marked, says Langford, by a quarrel and division in the useful Commercial Committee. As in so many of these regrettable cases the dispute arose in connection with the expenditure of the funds. A deputation had been appointed by the Committee to oppose a Bill

brought into Parliament for the purpose of permitting the export of brass, and there were some gentlemen who thought the expense of the opposition should be paid for out of the funds, whilst others thought it should not. A meeting was held on the 11th May, 1790, for the purpose of considering this question and others. Among the remainder was a Bill introduced into Parliament by the Goldsmiths' Company, and letters which had been received from the Surveyor and Controller of the General Post Office.

Another item of business was the examination of the measures which had been used to establish such a mode of trying the quality of sword blades as might effectually secure swords of the most perfect quality for the King's troops and the consideration of what further measures might be necessary in order to obtain for the manufacturers of the town the reputation of making swords that might be relied upon. Sword
Blades.

The question of the exportation of tools seemed still to be disturbing the minds of the Committee, for at the same meeting it was arranged to consider the attempts which were being made or were in contemplation for obtaining a free exportation of button shanks, button shells, button moulds, "or any part of our wares in an unfinished state," or any tools or machines "used in our manufactures and for repealing the statutory provisions made for preventing our artificers leaving the kingdom." Exportation
of Tools, &c.

Langford expresses the view that the meeting was probably a stormy one, and says "it was certainly a long one, and had to be adjourned until the 18th May, 1790." In confirmation of this view he says that the importance attached to these meetings was evident from the "careful" report which was published—a more "interesting document of its kind" having "rarely been published." Adjourn-
ment.

The adjourned meeting was held at the Birmingham Hotel, and the following notice of it was published by advertisement in both the newspapers and by cards sent to the members. Charges
against
Mr. Garbett.

"The meeting of the Commercial Committee is adjourned to Tuesday, the 18th inst., at five o'clock

in the evening, at the Hotel, to proceed further in the consideration of the charges exhibited by Mr. Woolley against Mr. Garbett, their chairman, and to determine whether the addition lately made to the Committee was not contrary to the original resolutions.

(Signed)

W. Villers	William Chance	Joseph Green
Thomas Green	Edward Homer	William Walker
Alexander Walker	Robert Coales	John Guest
Jonah Grundy	John Bingham	William Hawkins
Thomas Grundy."		

Members
present.

In the report of the meeting it is stated that the following members were present :—

Matthew Boulton	Geo. Russell	Harry Hunt
William Russell	John Ryland	Thomas Green
James Watt	Samuel Ryland	Thomas Gill
Edward Palmer	James Alston	James Yates
Henry Perkins	Samuel Garbett	James Goddington
Geo. Humphreys	Francis Garbett	Sampson Freeth
James Woolley	William Turner	B. Blythe
Robert Coales	James Bingham	Jos. Jukes
William Villers	Thomas Willmore	Joseph Smith
Joseph Gibbs	John Scale	Robert Smith
Thomas Grundy	John Bingham	John Hurd
William Walker	Jos. Rabone	James Benton
Wm. Humphreys	William Ryland	

The
Complaint.

At the commencement of the meeting Mr. Villers informed the Committee that Mr. Samuel Garbett, their chairman, had refused to deliver to him the book containing the minutes of their meetings—although he had been in the chair at the last meeting—but had written to him (Mr. Villers), stating that he kept it as being necessary for his defence, although it was open for his (Mr. Villers') inspection or the inspection of any other person whatever on behalf of Mr. Woolley.

Resolution.

Mr. Garbett, having in reply stated that Mr. Villers had refused him a copy of the resolution passed at the last meeting, by which he, as the chairman, was acquitted of the first charge brought against him by Mr. Woolley,

it was resolved :—"That it is the opinion of this meeting
 "that Mr. Garbett should continue to keep the Minute
 "Book of this Committee until the present disputes
 "respecting sword blades are finally closed, as he hath
 "uniformly allowed any member of the Committee access
 "to it."

It is evident that a certain amount of recrimination Chairman.
 took place at the meeting, because immediately after the
 resolution referred to was passed Mr. Garbett asked Mr.
 Villers whether if he was chosen Chairman of the meeting,
 he would, next morning, allow Mr. Garbett access to the
 minutes of the meeting ? ; "and Mr. Villers, not giving a
 satisfactory answer, Matthew Boulton, Esquire, was
 requested to take the chair." Being a man of great power
 and firm decision, Matthew Boulton had no sooner taken
 the chair than he read the following minute of the previous
 meeting, of which Mr. Villers had refused Mr. Garbett
 a copy, viz. :—

"It appears to this Committee that it was essentially Sword
Blades.
 necessary for the good of the trade and satisfaction
 of the General Officers, that the agreement made
 by Mr. Woolley should not be complied with, until
 the other 400 blades from Germany arrived, and for
 which Mr. Garbett received the thanks of the
 Committee two years ago."

Mr. Garbett then read a letter he had received from
 Sir Robert Lawley, Bart., acquainting him that he had
 applied to the Treasury in consequence of the desire
 expressed by the Committee at the previous meeting
 respecting the Bill which the London Goldsmiths had then
 before Parliament, and that he had received from Mr.
 Rose an obliging answer about the same, and about sword
 blades. It is unfortunate that fuller particulars of these
 matters are not available, but clearly the meeting was
 satisfied with this report, because it at once expressed
 "a grateful sense" of "Sir Robert Lawley's constant
 attention to the interest of this town."

Mr. Garbett then proceeded to answer the second Second
Charge
against
Garbett.
 charge made against him, when Mr. Woolley acquainted
 the meeting that he had something further to say on the
 first charge. This the Committee refused to hear "as Mr.

Garbett had been acquitted of that charge at the preceding meeting." Mr. Woolley then expressed a desire to prove his second charge, but Mr. Garbett admitting he had sent Mr. Gill's pamphlet to the members for the county, "and that Mr. Woolley had long before that time told him that Mr. Gill's own servant was the examiner of his master's and Mr. Woolley's swords," the Committee desired Mr. Garbett to proceed when Messrs. Villers, Coales, Woolley, Jos. Gibbs, William Walker, Thomas Grundy, and Joseph Rabone left the room.

Birmingham
v. German
Swords.

The writer has been unable to obtain full details of the sword dispute, but it appears from Hutton's "History of Birmingham" that at that time Birmingham had been famous for the manufacture of swords for many centuries, and no doubt from its earliest infancy. Previous to the American War, however, it is said that English swords fell into disrepute, and on October 1st, 1783, application was made for leave to import swords and sword blades from Germany. A member of the Board of Trade, the Earl of Surrey, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, wrote to Mr. Eyre, of Sheffield, to inform him of this fact, and to solicit such information as would enable him to rebut the statements made upon the inferiority of the English blades. The people of Sheffield being (as Hutton somewhat naively puts it) "makers of cutting instruments of the more civil kind," Mr. Eyre referred the letter to Mr. Gill, of Birmingham, who memorialised the Lords of the Treasury, "stating that swords could be made by him equal to the German ones." In 1786 one of the East India orders was divided between English and German manufacturers, and Mr. Gill (desirous of proving his assertion) obtained an order from the Board to have the swords of the two countries tried by a test, which reduced the blade from 36 inches to 29 inches, from hilt to point, by forcing it into a curved state. Of 2,654 swords presented by Mr. Gill only four were rejected, whilst of the German swords 28 were rejected out of 1,428 presented. Other English makers, presumably not all of Birmingham, presented 3,784, of which 1,084 were rejected. The result of the whole test was, as stated by Hutton, "one to thirteen in favour of Mr. Gill's swords as compared

“with the foreign ones, and one to one thousand as compared with the others made in England.”

These interesting details throw some light on the probable trouble between Mr. Garbett and Mr. Woolley, and after hearing Mr. Garbett's defence of his action, the Commercial Committee resolved :—

Mr. Garbett
justified.

“That Mr. Garbett acted judiciously for the common interest of the trade, at the time when the comparative trials between the Birmingham and German blades were coming on, in sending an account of a proof of swords at the India House to Sir Robert Lawley and Sir George Shuckburgh, that those gentlemen might unquestionably see, and be prepared to show on good authority, that Birmingham blades had excelled those of Germany.”

Mr. Garbett then proceeded to defend himself against Mr. Woolley's third charge, which related to the same question of swords. After his defence, five resolutions were passed unanimously, as follows :—

Third Charge
against
Mr. Garbett.

- (1) “That Mr. Garbett acted very properly in attending the Board of General Officers, with his son, as members of this Committee.”
- (2) “That Mr. Garbett did, in every instance which appears to this Committee, assert that good swords would be made at Birmingham if a proper price was given for them and a proper proof established to prevent insufficiency.”
- (3) “That it doth not appear to this Committee that Mr. Garbett ever represented that Mr. Woolley could not make swords perfectly fit for service.”
- (4) “That it appears to this Committee that the manufacturers had sufficient opportunity of speaking for themselves before the Board of General Officers and of justifying their own cause.”
- (5) “That upon hearing Mr. Garbett's defence against Mr. Woolley's third charge there doth not appear to this Committee any ground for such charge.”

Other
Charges.

There appeared to have been quite a full bill of charges against Mr. Garbett, for the published records inform us that Mr. Garbett then proceeded to defend himself against Mr. Woolley's fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth charges, and after due consideration the following six resolutions were passed :—

- (1) "That as this Committee had declared, fifteen months after the trial of swords at the India House by Col. Windes, that their great object was to establish such a mode of trial as would effectually secure swords of the most perfect quality, and that troops might more safely rely on, than upon any that were ever made before, and as a Board of General Officers had recommended to the King an additional proof to that which had been used at the India House in 1786, and had recommended that no swords should be received without undergoing that additional proof, in the presence of five or more colonels or field officers, it was highly commendable in Mr. Garbett to desire the Lord Advocate to acquaint Mr. Dundas and the directors of the India Company with the representation which the General Officers had made to the King."
- (2) "That it appears to this Committee that Mr. Harvey and Mr. Gill admitted that bad swords had been made at Birmingham, and that both they and Mr. Woolley were desirous an effectual proof should be established."
- (3) "That it appears to this Committee that Mr. Stevenson, the gentleman who is employed by the India Company as their Inspector of Small Arms, has wrote (*sic*) to Mr. Garbett, the 5th and 12th May, 1789, that he laments the uncertainty of the proof of swords hitherto devised and that he will cheerfully concur with Messrs. Boulton and Watt in recommending such modes of trial as they may prefer to the present."
- (4) "That it doth not appear to this Committee that it was necessary for Mr. Garbett to make any apology to the India Company, or to Mr.

Stevenson, their Inspector of Small Arms, that gentleman coinciding in opinion with Mr. Garbett respecting the proof of sword blades."

- (5) "That it doth not appear to this Committee that the Board of Control ever required the India Company to make inquiry about the quality of any swords, nor doth it appear that the Board of Control or the Lord Advocate knew anything about Mr. Woolley's making swords for the India Company, or that Mr. Woolley's swords did undergo, and always had done, such trials as to their fitness as was necessary for the safety of the troops who were to use them."
- (6) "That it doth not appear to this Committee that it was manifested in the most unequivocal manner to Mr. Garbett, by the Lord Advocate (or, in any manner whatever), that Mr. Garbett's representations were unfounded."

Notwithstanding the apparent sufficiency of these voluminous resolutions to justify the conduct of Mr. Garbett, the Commercial Committee went on to pass other resolutions. In the first they resolved that as Mr. Woolley left the meeting before Mr. Garbett made his defence to the second charge, the former thereby abandoned the prosecution of the remaining charge, but the Committee, nevertheless, thought it justice to Mr. Garbett to permit him to go on with his defence to the several articles "that he might be relieved from the heavy imputations of partiality" they contained, which, in the opinion of the meeting, he had completely rebutted, and had shown that he had been "actuated by no ill-will towards Mr. Woolley nor unjust partiality for others," but had done his duty for the protection and support of the Birmingham manufacturers of sword blades, for which he deserved the thanks of the Committee.

In the next resolution the Committee thanked Mr. Garbett for the essential service he had rendered to the Birmingham manufacturers of swords and to the community at large by the assiduous and exemplary discharge of his duty as Chairman of the Commercial Committee.

Garbett's
high
qualities.

It would be fitting at this point to say a few words respecting Mr. Samuel Garbett. In Bunce's "History of the Corporation of Birmingham" he is described as "one of the leading manufacturers of Birmingham and one of the most respectable residents—a gentleman who was included in the first body of Street Commissioners." Dr. Alexander Carlyle (an eminent Scotch minister) described him as "truly a very extraordinary man. He had been an ordinary brass-worker at Birmingham, and had no education further than writing and accounts, but he was a man of great acuteness of genius and extent of understanding. He had been at first distinguished from the common workman by inventing some stamp for shortening labour. . . . the more he was known the more he was esteemed. Let me observe once and for all that I have known no person but one more of such strong and lively feelings, of such a fair, candid, and honourable heart, and of such quick and ardent conceptions who still retained the power of cool and deliberate judgment before execution."

The
Opposers'
Statement.

Samuel Garbett's opposers, having left the meeting at an early stage, it was hardly to be expected when they read in the public press an account of the proceedings and the very definite resolutions passed, that they would remain silent; and, in fact, they did not, for on May 28th, 1790, they published a long statement, at the commencement of which they stated that they considered their conduct was misrepresented in the advertisement signed "Matthew Boulton," which was published in Aris's "Birmingham Gazette" and Swinney's "Chronicle," and added that they felt it incumbent upon them to lay before the public their opinion of the proceedings of the Committee and their reasons for leaving the room, and objecting to the resolutions passed. Their opinion was expressed in no measured terms in the following paragraphs:—

"First.—We cannot admit either the wisdom or the justice of resolving that the book which contains the Minutes of the Committee should remain in Mr. Garbett's hands during the consideration of the charges exhibited by Mr. Woolley against him,

because it implies this gross absurdity, viz. : that the person accused is the most proper to keep in his possession everything that might tend to prove the charges brought against him ; and that the person whom the Committee had unanimously appointed from among themselves, with the approbation of both parties, to preside at that time, was not fit to be entrusted therewith.

“Secondly.—We by no means consider the chairman acquitted of any of the charges brought against him ; but, on the contrary, conceive that, so far as Mr. Woolley was permitted to substantiate those charges they were fully proved, which we will instance in the first charge, where Mr. Woolley says that Mr. Garbett was the cause of the Birmingham sword cutlers violating an agreement made between them and the German importers of swords, in answer whereto Mr. Garbett did not attempt to deny the fact, but to justify it, wherein, however, we think he failed, because the engagement did not go to fix a day of trial, but only to prevent collusion and to show that the Birmingham cutlers were ready and desirous of coming to trial, by obliging themselves to make, within a limited time, a certain number of sword blades to a pattern which was given them that they might be produced when called upon for trial ; and we cannot admit that the thanks of the Committee to Mr. Garbett two years ago, will bear the construction which is put upon the first charge, being fully convinced that it did not, nor could, respect the violating of the agreement in question, that business not having been at all gone into till the adjourned meeting, held two days after ; . we cannot, therefore, submit to the opinion “that it is essentially necessary for the good of the trade and satisfaction of the General Officers” that the agreement should be broken, nor can we think that it is good for any trade that the Commercial Committee, or their chairman, should interfere with the private concerns of individuals, and thereby prevent those individuals from fulfilling the engagements which they have made

“Thirdly.—With respect to the second charge, part whereof Mr. Garbett also admitted, viz. : that he had sent Mr. Gill’s pamphlet to the members, although he denied that it contained gross untruths and notorious misrepresentations, Mr. Woolley having proved one untruth therein, by the testimony of a credible and respectable person, we think there was reason to conclude that he would have proved others had he been permitted so to do ; and as the fact of distributing the pamphlet, if it contained nothing but truth, carried no criminality in it, and if it contained falsehoods, the dispersing it was highly criminal, so it was of absolute necessity that the proofs should be produced ; we therefore are confident that it was the duty of the Committee to hear everything which Mr. Woolley could produce in support thereof, and that the determination of the Committee not to suffer Mr. Woolley to proceed, but to call on Mr. Garbett immediately for his defence, was highly improper and unjust, and that such conduct in the majority will fully justify us in the minds of all upright and impartial men for quitting the room, because it appears to us to be the first principle of justice to hear all that can be advanced on both sides, and that it is the highest Act of injustice to prevent either the complainant from substantiating his proofs, or the defendant from controverting the facts ; and we judge it too absurd in the extreme to decide on a question after hearing the arguments on one side only. We do, therefore, consider every resolution, subsequent to this which we so pointedly reprobate, as falling under the censure of partial decision.

“Happy in the approbation of our own minds, and not doubting but we shall receive that of all impartial men, we regard neither the number nor the greatness of opponents, resolved ever to defend the cause of injured probity against persecution and oppression ; and considering ourselves, as members of the Commercial Committee, entrusted by our townsmen with the important concern of watching over their interests

and preserving their liberties from every kind of encroachment, we have under that impression in this instance exerted, and will on all occasions continue to exert, our influence in preventing any body of men, however respectable, from interfering with the private concerns of individuals, convinced that such interference must be attended with the most pernicious consequences to the commerce and manufactures of this place.

“ We should be wanting in justice to Mr. Woolley, if we did not take this opportunity of returning him our thanks for the part he has taken in this business, being fully convinced that he has been actuated by no motives but such as are consistent with the character of a man of the strictest integrity and honour ; and we trust an impartial public will do him the justice to believe that he has not been governed so much by attention to his private interests as by ardent desire to prevent others from suffering hereafter the inconveniences and difficulties which he has experienced.

W. Villers	Joseph Gibbs	Joseph Rabone
Rob. Coales	Wm. Walker	Thomas Green
Harry Hunt.		

“ We, the undersigned, do also unite in commending the propriety and spirit of Mr. Viller’s conduct, in refusing to take the chair, after the indignity which had been offered him.

Rob. Coales	John Bingham	James Woolley
Harry Hunt	Joseph Gibbs	Thomas Green
Joseph Rabone.	Wm. Walker	

“ I do hereby testify my entire concurrence with every part of the preceding, except only that which is contained in the second Article.

Thomas Grundy.”

CHAPTER VII.

1790—1812.

Delays to
Shipping.

The quarrel which has been described in the last chapter was evidently of a serious character, and the absence of records seems to prove that it involved, at any rate, the temporary breaking up of the Commercial Committee. How long this state of things continued the historian does not relate, but in 1794 we find the president of the Manchester Commercial Society writing to a leading merchant in Birmingham suggesting that a similar society should be established here. In his "Chapters in the History of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce" the late Mr. Elijah Helm said that it appeared that arrangements for the sailing of merchant vessels, under convoy—a condition rendered necessary by the fact that the country was then at war—were frequently liable to postponement at the request of exporters at other English commercial centres. This delay was an occasion of so much loss and inconvenience to Manchester merchants that an effort was made to secure the founding of Commercial Societies or Chambers of Commerce in manufacturing centres, where they did not exist, in order that concerted and binding agreements might be made to secure punctuality of sailing. It was thought also that the multiplication of such bodies would strengthen the hands of the Manchester Society in its endeavours to suppress the "unmercantile proceedings referred to;" and as Birmingham goods were then, as now, extensively exported from Liverpool, it was natural that the Manchester Society should turn their eyes to this City.

Commercial
Society.

It is clear that a Commercial Society was formed—or the old Commercial Committee revived under another name, and the absence of public records may be accounted for by the desire to conduct business privately and not publicly as had been done by the Committee between 1783 and 1790. In 1795 the Manchester Society was almost incessantly occupied in communicating with the

Privy Council, the Admiralty, and shipowners, both by letter and by personal interviews, for the purpose of securing vessels, arranging for convoys, and obtaining special orders for the removal of the embargo in each case. Correspondence was also conducted with leading merchants or societies in other places, including Birmingham, in order to ensure the due despatch of goods from these points to the ports of departure, so as to prevent delay as far possible in their shipment and in the assembling at the rendezvous of the merchantmen and the convoys intended to protect them.

In the year 1795 there was also another question which engaged the attention of the Birmingham Commercial Society, viz. : "the obstacles to trade with the Ecclesiastical State in Italy." On the 26th August in that year a meeting of merchants in London passed a resolution expressing the opinion that the sale and consumption of the produce and manufactures of the country were capable, under the then existing circumstances, of being greatly increased in the Pope's dominions, without prejudice to his own subjects, and very much to the advantage of those of England; and that, at that juncture, from the situation of public affairs and the favourable disposition of the Roman Pontiff, commercial arrangements might be made that would secure to this country the "entire and exclusive" supply of the various manufactures which the Pope's subjects were in want of and which had hitherto been chiefly furnished from France. The Manchester Society stated that they were willing to co-operate with the meeting of London merchants "in any measure likely to promote so desirable an object" as the increase of British trade with the Ecclesiastical State, and they shortly afterwards presented to the Foreign Secretary the following proposal for a Treaty with the Pontifical State :—

"First, the admission of the manufactures of this country on equal terms with the most favoured nations; second, a reduction of duties on the admission of some articles, which duties, being extravagantly high, are as detrimental to the revenue of the Ecclesiastical State, by encouraging

Obstacles to
Trade with
Italy.

smuggling, as they are to us by diminishing the consumption which would otherwise take place; and, lastly, a more speedy decision of differences arising in the course of trade. At present chicanery may be carried on its utmost stretch by delaying judgment and obtaining revision of verdicts on the plainest and most trivial subjects. This last object deserves particular consideration, and if it was possible to hasten this negotiation so that it might be carried on with M. Erskine before he leaves England, there is every reason to hope that it would be attended with success."

Letters were sent to the Commercial Societies of Birmingham and Leeds and the Chamber of Commerce of Exeter desiring them to join in the efforts to secure the proposed Treaty, and the only recorded reply from these bodies came from Mr. Joseph Green, the chairman of the Birmingham Society, who expressed a desire to assist in obtaining the Treaty, adding:—

"We are not acquainted with the particular duties [on our goods], though too well with the delay of justice in our commercial concerns."

The projected Treaty does not appear to have been concluded.

In the summer of 1796 the progress of the French army in Italy gave rise to serious apprehensions in Manchester and other places as to the safety of the trade with that country. On the 24th June a meeting of English merchants was held at the British Consul's, when it was decided that all British property should be shipped—at least, all that could be removed—on board two frigates and several merchantmen then in harbour. On the 25th and 26th June they were engaged in that operation. On the 26th the French were within 15 miles of Leghorn, and on the 27th, in the morning, all the English and emigrants embarked and proceeded to Corsica. Leghorn was shortly afterwards in possession of the French.

On the 27th July, 1796, the Manchester Society addressed a representation to the Rt. Hon. William Pitt, his Majesty's Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling his attention to the serious state of affairs, and pointing out

that merchants trading to Italy were "justly alarmed on being informed that some houses in London have refused to pay bills drawn upon and accepted by them in consequence of, and previous to, the French taking possession of Leghorn, availing themselves of the Act of Parliament which forbids paying bills drawn from places in the power and possession of the French." The support of the Birmingham Commercial Society was invited, and, although no record exists of any action taken, it cannot be doubted that serious notice was taken of the request.

On the 29th November, 1796, a well-attended meeting took place at the London Tavern in London of delegates from Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Halifax, Exeter, and about a dozen London merchants, at which a series of important resolutions was adopted. The first resolution recited that it appeared from indisputable proofs that the generals and commissaries of the French armies, "taking advantage of the security that several states in Italy placed in their neutrality and the progress of their arms in that country," not only generally seized and confiscated the property of the British subjects found in various places, either in private warehouses or in the public warehouses of the state, but also compelled by force and violence, merchants and traders of many places of which they took possession to bring to them their books of accounts, and to pay to them whatever sums of money they appeared to be owing, either by bills of exchange or book debts, to the English merchants, and that they further stopped at the post office at Leghorn the letters and took out of them and compelled the payment of the bills that were enclosed in them and could be recovered.

Confiscation
of British
Property in
Southern
Europe.

In the second resolution it was insisted that by acting thus the generals and commissaries of the French armies "violated all the principles of faith among men, controverted the established laws of war among nations, and grossly infringed the most sacred rules of political justice which constantly tends to lessen the miseries of war by making the enemy suffer as little as possible individually, although from necessity as much as possible collectively."

In the third resolution it was asserted that "the depredations now complained of" were commenced by the French armies immediately after they took possession of Leghorn, notwithstanding an assurance given by the Governor of Leghorn that "the neutrality of Tuscany would be respected."

In the fourth resolution it was stated that British subjects and others—holders of British property—residing at Leghorn, "confiding in the certainty" of the assurance given in the proclamation by the Governor, "forebore" to take the necessary steps for the security of their property, which, had they not been misled by this "public act, from the highest and supposed best authority, they would, no doubt, have succeeded in placing out of the reach of danger," whereas, as a matter of fact, it was taken possession of by the French generals and commissaries.

In the fifth resolution a hope was expressed that his Majesty's ministers would require and procure justice and compensation from the Tuscan government, so that Tuscan subjects and others residing in Tuscany "may not be permitted for a moment to imagine that by paying extorted sums to French generals or commissaries they can be exonerated from their legal debts to British merchants."

In the sixth resolution his Majesty's ministers were requested to make and enforce claims of indemnification for the losses that British subjects had sustained by the "outrages and depredations" of the French in the States of the Emperor and the Pope in Italy—particularly at Milan and Bologna—where similar depredations and extortions were practised as at Leghorn, and where "nugative discharges" were likewise granted by the French generals and commissaries.

The subsequent resolutions dealt with the appointment and powers of a Committee upon which the Birmingham Commercial Society was represented, and which met the following day at Tom's Coffee House, and settled the contents of the communication to be made to his Majesty's ministers, requesting an audience. It was not until the

9th December, 1796, that this audience took place, and there were then present twenty-two members of the Committee.

On the broader aspect of the matter the Prime Minister (Mr. Pitt) said, in reply, that he thought that with regard to the claims for the loss of property, no fair grounds justifying indemnification could be established against Tuscany unless proofs were adduced, or sufficient presumption could be maintained that the public notification made with the view of allaying the general uneasiness did not proceed from a sincere conviction that the intelligence thus communicated was perfectly reliable. He was, however, satisfied that the outrages committed were of such a gravity as would justify a claim for redress being made against France if the negotiations in progress for peace would permit of it. Continuing, Mr. Pitt said the debts due to British subjects would be considered in quite a different category, and the Tuscan government would be informed that the common rules of justice must, as they conceived, ensure in this instance relief to British subjects in Tuscany without the interference of the Government.

The Prime
Minister's
Reply.

During the Easter Law Term of 1796 the Court of the King's Bench had given an important decision in the case of *Smith v. Shepherd*, whereby inland water-carriers were held to be liable for damages to goods entrusted to their care and whilst in their possession. As a result of this decision a meeting of proprietors of craft employed on inland navigations and owners of coasting vessels and canal carriers interested was held at Hull on the 3rd September, 1796, when it was decided to endeavour to secure such an amendment of the law as would exempt them from the dictum laid down in the decision referred to, and exonerate them from all responsibilities in the way of damages to goods which were caused during their carriage. Naturally this attitude on the part of the carriers could not be allowed to pass unnoticed by manufacturers and traders. On the 29th November delegates from Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and Halifax, met in London, and as a result of their meeting an advertisement, which was signed on behalf of Birmingham by Jonah

Inland
Transport
Troubles.

Grundy and Benjn. Stokes, was inserted in the press, giving notice to the effect that it was intended to oppose the application to Parliament, and inviting "all those interested in receiving and forwarding goods to join in petitioning Parliament that the existing laws may remain in force."

The War—
Spain's
Attitude.

On January 4th, 1797, Mr. Benjamin Stokes, of the Birmingham Society, advised the Manchester Society that on that day a meeting had been held in Birmingham to consider the attitude of Spain. Advices, he said, had been received from that country, bearing date November 30th, 1796, reporting that the Spanish Government had demanded an account of all moneys due to England, and that such moneys should be handed over to the Spanish authorities. He stated further that recent advices from Hamburg expressed apprehensions of a descent upon that port.

The matter was considered by the Manchester Society and also by the Exeter Chamber of Commerce, and it was shortly afterwards decided by the Societies of Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Halifax, and Exeter that a notice should be published, printed in the various European languages, intimating the regulations which should be observed in the conduct of trade. The terms of the notice were as follow :—

- " Notice of the Commercial Societies of Manchester Leeds, Halifax, Birmingham, and Exeter.
- " The Societies of the above-mentioned places declare the following as fundamental principles of trade :—
- " That an English house having executed an order in a reasonable time, and shipped the goods as soon as conveniently may be, has performed its part of the agreement, and is not responsible for any subsequent delay of departure or arrival.
- " That where no specific agreement is made, contracts are always understood to be made in English money, and in English weights and measures.
- " That no delays or abatements of payments or abandonment can be admitted from a variation in exchange or a detention of vessels.

“That no receipts for debts due to England, or for any contribution paid or pretended to be paid to agents of a government or hostile armies, shall be admitted as a partial or total acquittal of such debts.

“That some houses affected by the war and by the French Conquests, having behaved with the greatest integrity, whilst others have availed themselves of circumstances, to set up the most extravagant claims, these Chambers will transmit to each other the names of all houses abroad acting contrary to these principles, so that every exporter may be on his guard against such correspondents.”

Several thousand copies of this circular, with slight amendments, were printed in various European languages, and circulated by agreement between all the societies. The period was a very critical one for commerce: Spain had declared war against Great Britain on October 6th, 1796; on February 14th, 1797, the Spanish fleet was defeated by Sir John Jervis (afterwards Earl St. Vincent) off Cape St. Vincent; and on February 27th, 1797, the Bank of England suspended cash payment, which was not resumed until May 1st, 1821. The complications which arose out of the state of war that then existed were innumerable, and involved the consideration of many abstruse questions by institutions, such as the Birmingham Commercial Society, whose function it was to safeguard commercial interests.

In the absence of original records it is, of course, impossible to give an account of the steps taken by the Birmingham Commercial Society to deal with the troubles and disasters arising out of the great war with France, and the records of the Manchester Society shew that these troubles were the chief concern. For instance, on March 9th, 1797, the president of the Manchester Commercial Society was requested by resolution to write to the chairman of the Birmingham body—

“desiring that he will furnish this society with the plan of their intended application to Government for temporary [financial] assistance during the present embarrassment.”

The embarrassment here referred to was the locking up of the funds of British manufacturers and merchants in the countries where the war was going on, especially in Italy and Spain; and the request mentioned above having been made, Mr. Jonas Grundy, in the absence of Mr. Benjamin Stokes, the chairman of the Birmingham Commercial Society, stated that it was proposed to submit the applications of the several sufferers through the London Committee, and that the total amount of assistance required for his own town would be from £100,000 to £200,000. There is no evidence that the application met with any success, but it is clear from the correspondence that the war resulted in very serious financial inconvenience as well as actual loss and stoppage of trade and industry.

Union of
Commercial
Societies.

Even at the close of the eighteenth century the need for federation among commercial societies was somewhat keenly felt, and about the year 1797 a more or less successful endeavour was made to establish a permanent union—thus anticipating the idea embodied in the present Association of Chambers of Commerce. The matter was discussed on several occasions, and appears to have been cordially received by all the local associations which had been represented at a recent meeting in London, but the adoption of the idea does not seem to have gone further than a general agreement to confer together upon occasions calling for mutual consultation and combined action, to assimilate, as far as possible, the constitution and laws of the several societies, and to carry on correspondence and exchange information upon subjects of general interest. The manner in which this co-operation was maintained is partly indicated in a report of a meeting of the Commercial Societies of Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Halifax, and Exeter, held in London at this period, when it was unanimously resolved:—

- (1) "That in the present critical situation of affairs a general co-operation of the different manufacturing towns of England is highly necessary for the security of trade in its present and future operations."
- (2) "That during the course of the present war, and more recently since the progress of the

French armies in Italy and Germany, we have experienced from some of our correspondents the greatest honour and punctuality in their dealings, whilst others, taking advantage of the existing circumstances, have abused the confidence reposed in them by exposing British property, procrastinating payments, and raising unjust and futile difficulties to evade payment."

- (3) "That in order to preserve to the fair and honourable dealer the advantages which such conduct so justly entitles them to, and at the same time to expose the conduct of such as have forfeited the confidence hitherto reposed in them, we shall, from time to time, communicate to each other such instances as have, or may hereafter occur, tending to promote this salutary end."
- (4) "That each individual house of our respective societies shall be at liberty to transmit copies of these resolutions, signed by the secretary, to such of their correspondents as they shall think proper."

It is clear from the last resolution that there was, at any rate, an informal kind of union between the various Commercial Societies.

About this time there seems to have been a continuous stream of communication between the various commercial Societies and a number of communications between them and the Government, and Mr. Helm, in his "Chapters in the History of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce," says it is not difficult to discern in the accounts of the numerous conversations between Mr. Pitt and representatives of the Commercial Societies that the great Statesman always treated with respect the proposals put before him on behalf of the societies. That these proposals were couched in dignified and definite language may easily be gathered from the following memorandum left with Lord Liverpool and Mr. Pitt:—

- "That Lord Malmesbury be entreated to include or to stipulate that commercial treaties shall be hereafter formed between England and France, Spain,

Inter-
national
Trade.

and such other countries with whom he may negotiate, on the basis of an unlimited and reciprocal admission of importation into each of the respective countries of the produce and manufacture of the other, of whatever nature or description they may be. The duties on importation, and the internal duties thereafter to be at the discretion of the Government into whose country the goods may be introduced with the only provision that they shall not exceed the duties required to be paid on similar articles and similar qualities when imported from the most favoured nations."

Diminished
Activity of
Commercial
Societies.

In the year 1798 the Commercial Societies which had hitherto been so energetic and virile, owing to the great drawbacks encountered by commercial men in consequence of the war, began to shew signs of diminished activity, but although their meetings were less frequent, some of their proceedings during the following two years were still of peculiar interest, especially to the localities concerned. Having regard to the absence of records, however, it is impossible to say what took place in Birmingham, but Mr. Helm, in the work previously referred to, tells us, that although the minutes of meetings of the Manchester Society, specially called, are recorded to the end of 1801, they then suddenly terminated and were not revived until 1820, when the Chamber of Commerce was formed. The old society, however, was never dissolved, and had money in the bank which was handed over to the Chamber. It is probable that a similar period of inactivity took place in Birmingham, but here the need for combined effort and action was apparently felt at an earlier period than in Manchester, for the Chamber of Commerce, whose history will now be entered upon, was founded in 1813—just one hundred years ago.

CHAPTER VIII.

1813.

It is evident from contemporary records that in the year 1813 the need for the re-establishment of a responsible body to watch over and protect the interests of the commerce and manufactures of Birmingham was keenly felt. Then, as now, the members of the legislature were inclined to overlook these vital interests, and, unintentionally perhaps, to sacrifice them for political purposes of a party nature. Towards the summer of 1813, however, a definite movement was made towards the foundation of the Chamber of Commerce—to take the place of the hitherto existing Commercial Committee or Society, which had for several years remained dormant even if it had not been dissolved. On the 19th July, 1813, there appeared in Aris's "Birmingham Gazette" the following notice :—

The
Chamber of
Commerce
Established

"The following Prospectus of the
"BIRMINGHAM COMMERCIAL SOCIETY.

"Having been circulated amongst the merchants and manufacturers of this town, we are desired to lay it before the public.

"The vast importance of the commerce and manufactures of this country to its welfare—the necessary dependence of its public revenue upon the resources of its merchants and manufacturers—and the reliance of a large proportion of its population for subsistence upon a foreign demand for the produce of its well-directed industry—all demonstrates the propriety of adopting some place by which these very general interests may be fairly appreciated, and efficiently supported.

"The strong and immediate interests which the middle classes feel in the commercial prosperity of the country, leads them to investigate and discriminate the

bearings of public measures upon its commerce and manufactures : but the members of that class of society of which the legislature is composed have seldom a personal acquaintance with trade, cannot be expected to possess that intimate knowledge of its relations which is so essentially requisite in all cases where it becomes the object of legislative control.

“Hence it has frequently happened that the interests of the manufacturing districts have been unintentionally sacrificed to erroneous commercial and political regulations, whilst the landed, the shipping, the Colonial, and other great and powerful interests have been protected by their advocates in Parliament, by concentrating their information and influence, and directing their attention to such proceedings of administration and the legislature as they conceived likely in any degree to affect their interests.

“Since a watchful superintendence has been found thus beneficial to obtain interests, surely the manufacturers of the United Kingdom (consisting of nearly a fourth part of its population, and, according to the calculation of Mr. Pitt, as far back as the year 1798, employing a capital of £120,000,000) ought to exercise a similar vigilance, to investigate the causes which have a tendency to retard or promote their prosperity, and endeavour to establish a bond of union which would render the influence of their joint exertions co-extensive with their national importance.

“The preceding observations, though general in their nature, are particularly applicable to Birmingham and its neighbourhood, unquestionably one of the most important manufacturing districts in the kingdom, the value of its manufactures being principally made up of the labour bestowed upon them by a very numerous population, employed, not only in raising a native and abundant raw produce, but in converting the metals so raised into all those useful and ornamental forms which contribute so largely to the necessities, conveniences, and elegance of life : whilst

they augment the national prosperity by the collective industry and ingenuity required in their production.

“Happily for the commercial and manufacturing part of the community, members of both Houses of Parliament have recently evinced a greater desire than at any former period, justly to appreciate the relations of commerce to the general interests of the Empire, and have found that they involve some of the most important principles of political economy that they are totally inconsistent with a narrow system of municipal arrangements for the benefit of a few, and that the diffusion of the commercial spirit has been most instrumental in advancing the national welfare.

“These considerations, especially when viewed with reference to the unparalleled efforts which have been made to exclude our manufactures from the Continent of Europe, and the increasing competition consequent on the suspension of intercourse with America, forcibly indicate the necessity of establishing a Commercial Society in Birmingham, composed of its most respectable and intelligent merchants and manufacturers, for the purpose of collecting and comparing their opinions—of acting as a medium of communication with ministers and the legislature on the subject of trade, and of co-operating with other parts of the kingdom on all questions affecting the general prosperity of manufactures and commerce of the British Empire.

“Such an institution, it is conceived, would be no less advantageous to the Government than beneficial to the trading part of the community; since it would enable the former to avail itself of a greater mass of intelligence than could be collected by any other means, and ensure to the interests of the latter that protection to which they are so amply entitled, and which, there can be no doubt, it is the wish of ministers at all times to afford.”

One hundred years ago Birmingham had no Lord Mayor or Mayor, and, as a matter of fact, was not

Application
to High
Bailiff.

incorporated. The chief civic official was the High Bailiff, who was annually elected by the jury of the Court Leet. It was his duty to see that the fairs were duly proclaimed and due order maintained in fairs and markets; to seize and commit to custody to be taken before a magistrate persons seen in markets and fairs using unlawful games to the injury of ignorant persons and thoughtless youths; to see that traders had legal weights and measures; to see that the town had standard weights and measures; and by the custom of the Manor to seize for the use of the poor all butter and other articles made up into pounds or any other certain (*i.e.*, declared) weight ready for sale, which, on examination, were found deficient.

On the 14th July, 1813, the following requisition was handed to the High Bailiff (Mr. Richard Spooner) and a copy of it, together with the public notice attached, was published in Aris's "*Birmingham Gazette*":—

"BIRMINGHAM, *July 14th*, 1813.

"*To* RICHARD SPOONER, ESQ.,

"High Bailiff of Birmingham.

"WE, the undersigned, considering that it is expedient to establish a COMMERCIAL SOCIETY in the town of Birmingham, for the purpose of collecting and comparing the opinions of its principal merchants and manufacturers—of acting as a medium of communication with ministers and the legislature on the subject of trade and of co-operating as occasion may require with other parts of the United Kingdom on all questions affecting the general prosperity of the manufactures and commerce of the British Empire, do request you to call a Town's Meeting, to take the same into consideration."

Joseph Webster, Low Bailiff	Mathias Attwood.
Henry Perkins	W. W. Cooper
Isaac Spooner, Jun.	George Attwood
Samuel Galton	Richard Smith
Thomas Attwood	John T. Lawrence
Timothy Smith	O. Mason
Samuel Lloyd	Thomas Phipson

Richard Peyton
 George Daniels
 Wm. Shorthouse
 Joshua Scholefield
 Wm. Frears
 Simon Walker
 Samuel T. Galton
 James Goddington
 Wm. Francis
 Anderson and Ashmore
 Robert Blyth
 Wm. Redfern
 James Pearson
 Thomas Messenger
 Edward Frears
 David Blair
 Thomas Ryland
 Wm. Chance, Jun.

Jones Henry Attwood
 J. W. Crompton
 P. M. James
 T. L. Hawkes
 John Turner
 John Biddle
 Thomas Small
 Barrs and Hands
 Joseph Phipson
 James Baker
 Thomas Pemberton
 John Ryland
 Wm. Nevill
 Wm. Harrold
 George Bragg
 Wm. Shakespear
 Thomas Clark
 Thomas Potts.

“In consequence of the above highly respectable requisition, I do appoint a MEETING OF MERCHANTS, MANUFACTURERS, and other INHABITANTS of this town, to be holden in the ROYAL HOTEL, on WEDNESDAY NEXT, the 21st instant, at ELEVEN O’CLOCK in the forenoon.

“RICHARD SPOONER,

“High Bailiff.

“Chair to be taken at Twelve precisely.”

The account of the proceedings of the public meeting, which seems to have been successful in every way, was published in Aris’s “Birmingham Gazette” on the 26th July, 1813, in the following form :—

Report of
 Public
 Meeting.

“BIRMINGHAM, *July 21st, 1813.*

“At a General Meeting of the Merchants, Manufacturers, and other Inhabitants of this town, held this day at the Royal Hotel, convened by the High Bailiff, in compliance with a requisition addressed

to him for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of establishing a Commercial Society in the Town of Birmingham.

“ RICHARD SPOONER, ESQ., High Bailiff, in the chair.

“ Resolved unanimously—

“ (1) That it is expedient to establish a Commercial Society in the Town of Birmingham, for the purpose of collecting and comparing the opinions of its merchants and manufacturers, of acting as a medium of communication with ministers and the legislature on the subject of trade, and of co-operating, as occasion may require, with other parts of the United Kingdom, on questions affecting the general prosperity of the manufactures and commerce of the British Empire.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“ (2) That the proposed Society be called ‘The Chamber of Manufacturers and Commerce of Birmingham.’ ”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“ (3) That all persons interested in the manufactures and commerce of this town and neighbourhood, subscribing a sum of not less than one guinea per annum, be considered members of the Society. Subscriptions to be received by the treasurer or secretary, and paid in advance for the first year. Subsequent subscriptions to be paid when called for by the Committee, providing that not more than one call be made in each year. Every member intending to leave the Society shall give six months’ notice of his intention to the secretary, in writing, or be liable to pay the subscription for the ensuing year.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“ (4) That sixty members be chosen as a Committee to manage the affairs of the Society, and that ten be competent to act.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(5) That fifteen members of the Committee shall annually go out, for the first three years, by ballot, of the original Committee, and afterwards by rotation, and that such fifteen shall not be re-eligible for that year.”

“Resolved unanimously—

“(6) That the Committee shall annually elect a Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, and supply any vacancies that may occur in their number during the year. Any person chosen to supply a vacancy shall go out in the same rotation as his predecessor would have done.”

“Resolved unanimously—

“(7) That the Annual General Meeting of the Society shall be held on the first Tuesday in June, at which Meeting the Committee shall report their proceedings. Auditors shall be appointed, and fifteen members be elected upon the Committee to supply the places of those who go out, by each member then present, personally delivering a list of fifteen names eligible to serve on the Committee.”

“Resolved unanimously—

“(8) That printed lists of the Members of the Society eligible to serve on the Committee, shall be sent to each subscriber at least seven days previous to the Annual General Meeting.”

“Resolved unanimously—

“(9) That the Committee shall be empowered to make Bye Laws for their own Government; such Bye Laws to be approved by two-thirds of the Committee specially summoned for that purpose.”

“Resolved unanimously—

“(10) That the Committee shall keep an accurate register of all their proceedings in a book to be prepared for that purpose, which book shall be open for the inspection of any member of the Society at any meeting of the Committee.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(11) That any twenty of the Committee shall be empowered to call a Special General Meeting of the Members of the Society on giving seven days' notice by a circular letter to each member, or by advertisement in the Birmingham papers.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(12) That it shall be imperative on the Chairman, or, in his absence, on the Deputy Chairman of the Committee, to call a Special General Meeting of the Subscribers, on receiving a written requisition from one hundred members of the Society, or any smaller number, constituting not less than one-fourth of the whole; such requisition to state the object of the Meeting.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(13) That the conduct of the Committee on all questions shall be subject to the control and be regulated by the decisions of the Annual and Special General Meetings.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(14) That the gentlemen who signed the requisition for the Town's Meeting, together with the High Bailiff, be elected a Provisional Committee, and that they be directed to call a General Meeting of the Subscribers at the expiration of three months, when a Committee shall be elected for the current year, by the members then present marking lists previously laid on the table for that purpose. Any appointment made by the Provisional Committee to cease at the formation of the permanent Committee.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

“(15) That the Secretary shall keep a correct list of all subscribers to this Society, which list shall at all times be open to the examination of any subscriber.”

“ Resolved unanimously—

"(16) That Paul Moon James, Esq., be appointed Treasurer, and that he be requested to obtain signatures and to receive subscriptions."

"Resolved unanimously—

"(17) That these resolutions be printed in such papers as the High Bailiff shall think proper."

—Richard Spooner.

"The High Bailiff having left the chair, and the same having been taken by James Goddington, Esq."

"Resolved unanimously—

"That the thanks of this Meeting be given to the High Bailiff for his conduct in the chair."

—James Goddington.

There is no record available of the attendances at the Inaugural Meeting of the Chamber, held on the 21st July, 1813; but at a meeting held on the 9th August, 1813, the following gentlemen were present :—

Mr. Joseph Webster, in the chair.

Mr. P. M. James

Mr. Jas. Pearson

„ S. T. Galton

„ Henry Perkins

„ Jno. Biddle

„ Thos. Potts

„ Thomas Small

„ Richd. Peyton

„ J. W. Crompton.

At this meeting it was decided to circularise the various members of the Committee (*i.e.*, the Provisional Committee elected on the 21st July) requesting them to solicit their friends to become members, and to present the names of such gentlemen as wished to join at the next meeting. It was also decided to insert an advertisement in Aris's "Gazette" stating that the names of gentlemen desirous of becoming subscribers would be received by the Treasurer (Mr. P. M. James) at the Bank in Steelhouse Lane, or at the Banks of Messrs. Taylors and Lloyds, and at Messrs. Spooners and Attwood. The first officers appointed by the Chamber were :—

Chairman Mr. Richard Spooner.

Deputy Chairman .. Mr. Joseph Webster.

Treasurer Mr. P. M. James.

Secretary Mr. James Pearson.

First
Officers
(provisional)

The last named gentleman was empowered to employ an assistant at the expense of the Chamber.

Organisation

The work of organizing a satisfactory membership of the Chamber was undertaken with some vigour, and at a meeting held on the 2nd September, 1813, it was decided to advertise in Aris's "Gazette" that the merchants, manufacturers, and other inhabitants interested in the trade of Birmingham and its vicinity would be "personally waited upon for the purpose of ascertaining those who may be desirous of becoming members of this Chamber," and thirty-three gentlemen (who were afterwards added to) were appointed to conduct the canvass. Among these were such well-known names as Mr. Geo. Bragg, Mr. S. T. Galton, Mr. Joseph Ledsam, Mr. Richard Spooner, Mr. J. Blood, Mr. William Chance, Jun., Mr. Thos. Osler, Mr. Thos. Attwood, Mr. Thos. Ryland, Mr. W. Shakespear, Mr. Joshua Scholefield, and Mr. Jno. Ryland.

Frequent Meetings.

During the initial stages meetings were held somewhat frequently for the purpose mainly of electing members and spurring on those gentlemen who were inclined to delay the canvass of the districts allotted to them. So far as can be ascertained from the Minute Book about 130 subscribers were obtained between the 2nd September and the 28th October, so that, with the gentlemen who signed the requisition for the inaugural meeting, there would seem to have been a total membership of between 175 and 190 at the First General Meeting.

Scotch Bankruptcy Law.

The first commercial matter dealt with by the Chamber related to a Bill then pending in Parliament with reference to Scotch Bankruptcies, and upon this a Sub-Committee reported as follows :—

"It appears from the documents laid before this Committee, from the resolutions of the merchants, etc., of Manchester [at that time Manchester had no Chamber of Commerce], and also from representations of Scotch traders resident in Birmingham, that the system of Scotch Bankruptcy Laws is extremely injurious in practice, and that the Bill recently introduced by the Lord Advocate of Scotland does not remedy the subject of complaint. It further

appears that the Bill prepared by Mr. Alexander Campbell has been approved by the Chamber of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as by persons interested in the Scotch trade resident in Birmingham..”

At a subsequent meeting of the Committee this report was taken into consideration, and the Lord Advocate's Bill was declared to be objectionable, inasmuch as it omitted “many salutary provisions” which were considered to be essential for the due administration of bankrupt estates and contained clauses which would take the nomination of the factor, trustee, and commissioners out of the hands of the creditors and vest it in men over whom they would have little or no control. The Bill prepared by Mr. Alexander Campbell, of Glasgow, at the request of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, was, however, declared to be “well calculated for the promotion of economy and security of the property sequestrate,” and the chairman was therefore requested to introduce Mr. Campbell to Sir Charles Mordaunt, Bart., and Dugdale Stafford Dugdale, Esq., the Members for the County, and such other Members of Parliament as he might think proper, and solicit them, on behalf of the Chamber, to oppose the Lord Advocate's Bill, and support that of Mr. Campbell.

The first General Meeting of the Members of the Chamber was held at the Public Office on the 19th November, 1813, Mr. T. L. Hawkes, Low Bailiff, occupying the chair. At this meeting the principal business was the election of the Committee for the ensuing year, the business of the Chamber having, up to this time, been conducted by the Provisional Committee nominated at the inaugural meeting on the 21st July. The names of the members of the first Committee are published in the appendix. At their initial meeting they appointed the following officers :—

<i>Chairman</i>	Samuel Tertius Galton.
<i>Deputy Chairman</i> .	Thomas Lakin Hawkes.
<i>Secretary</i>	Joseph Pearson.
<i>Treasurer</i>	Paul Moon James.

First
General
Meeting.

CHAPTER IX.

1814.

Law as to
Apprentice-
ship.

Before the close of 1813 the Chamber had on several occasions had under its consideration the question of the law of apprenticeship, as laid down in the Act of the 5th Eliz. cap. 4, entitled: "An Act Containing Divers Orders to Secure the Right of Artificers, Apprentices, etc.," and it appeared from the report of a Sub-committee that two Bills of "an opposite tendency" were about to be introduced into the House of Commons—the one in conformity with a petition presented to the House by the Rt. Hon. George Rose for the purpose of regulating, extending, and rendering more effectual the Act referred to, and the other, under the sanction of Mr. Sergeant Onslow, for the purpose of repealing so much of the statute as inflicted penalties on persons working at or exercising trades to which they had not served a seven years' apprenticeship. These Bills were dealt with in a series of ten resolutions, in the first of which it was asserted that the operation of the statute of Elizabeth "must be to promote and increase the inconveniences it professes to remove, inasmuch as it enfeebles that spirit of emulation which, whilst it is the only security to the public for their being supplied with the best work, upon the most favourable terms, ensures to the artificers that extension of the market which the excellence and cheapness of a manufacture never fails to command."

Although the language of this resolution is somewhat involved, its meaning is made clear by the second resolution, which expressed the view that any extension of the statute, or even its continuance, if enforced (apparently it had not been enforced), would not only be highly injurious to the trade of the United Kingdom, but particularly oppressive to persons engaged in manufactures "by depriving them of the liberty of disposing of their time, labour, and capital in the way most likely to conduce to their own advantage." The

next resolution, the meaning of which is unmistakable, was to the effect "that the institution of apprenticeships is in its nature reciprocally beneficial and by no means a sacrifice on the part of the apprentice, which requires a legislative provision to secure exclusive privileges either to the master or journeyman, as the skill and expertness acquired by seven years' steady employ (*sic*) under judicious and ingenious masters will always secure decided preference with those who have employment to offer or those who wish to purchase the produce of labour." Immediately following this the Chamber declared that the enforcement of the statute "by preventing a workman from exercising any other trade than the one which he has first acquired, would prove a restraint upon his rightful industry and ingenuity, and would oftentimes, during the fluctuations of commerce reduce him to beggary." The Chamber then went on to assert that if the statute had been enforced it would have operated as a serious impediment to the establishment of such manufactures as were intended for the exclusive supply of "foreign or occasional" markets, inasmuch as individuals "would not prudently have been bound apprentices to such manufactures nor could capital have been safely embarked therein." Expression was then given to the view that the "prosperity, extent, and excellence" of the manufactures of the town were to be ascribed principally to the unrestrained freedom of every artificer to exercise his talents in such manner as he thought proper. The next resolution, which was of a pessimistic character, was to the effect that "owing to the varying taste of the public in regard to the demand for manufactured goods and to the changes in the foreign political relations of the country—to which it is at all times exposed—the prosperity of most of the branches of trade in this town is extremely fluctuating, and, consequently, that the most severe and extensive misery would at times prevail if an excessive number of workmen, accustomed to exercise any one trade, were restrained from relieving themselves by turning their industry to some other more profitable employment." Had the views of the Chamber been allowed to stop here it might

have been urged that they were merely theoretical, and evidently realising this the Committee proceeded to cite a concrete case in the following words :—

“That if the statute in question had been enforced in regard to the numerous class of industrious artisans who have found employment during the war in the manufacture of arms in this town and neighbourhood, it would have been impossible to have provided the stock of arms which the security of the State has required—and when a peace shall have been concluded, all the workmen hitherto engaged in this extensive manufacture would, on such a system, be excluded from all employment whatever.”

The Chamber in its penultimate resolution endeavoured to clinch their arguments by stating that public opinion as to the impolicy of the statute of Elizabeth had been long and clearly expressed by an almost “uniform” objection to enforce its provisions ; that it was enacted when the commerce of the country was very limited, and commercial principles imperfectly understood ; and that it was altogether unsuitable to the increasing magnitude and importance of the trade and manufactures of the United Kingdom. In the last resolution it was decided to support Mr. Sergeant Onslow’s Bill, which was subsequently passed into law and the object of which has been previously stated, and the Chairman was requested to send copies of the resolutions to Mr. Sergeant Onslow “and to Mr. Littleton, the member for Staffordshire.” No mention is made of the members for Warwickshire, but the explanation probably is that Mr. Littleton was the person who called the attention of the Chamber to the matter. This view is confirmed by the proceedings at a subsequent meeting, when it was decided to present a petition to the House of Commons through the members for the County of Warwick :—Sir C. Mordaunt and Mr. D. S. Dugdale.

The Corn
Laws.

About this time the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce forwarded to the Birmingham Chamber a letter, calling their attention to the proposed alterations in the Corn Laws. “Upon a question so momentous and of so complicated a nature” the Committee “long and anxiously

deliberated." As a result of this the following resolutions were passed unanimously :—

- “(1) That the proposed alteration in the Corn Laws by imposing additional restraints on importation is calculated to effect a permanent advance in the price of grain, which, as the value of corn ultimately regulated the prices of all kinds of provisions, the wages of labour, and every article of native produce or manufacture, must essentially involve the interests of the community.”
- “(2) That the decided superiority which this nation has attained in the demands for its manufactures is to be attributed, in a great degree, to their comparative cheapness, which has enabled our merchants to meet competition in the most distant markets; and, therefore, that any further legislative measures having a tendency to enhance the wages of labour, will most injuriously affect the commercial population of the United Kingdom and materially diminish the advantages that have hitherto been derived from those mechanical improvements which have so much contributed to counteract the effects of taxation and of the increased prices of provisions.”
- “(3) That an augmentation in the prices of the necessaries of life has always been considered as one great evil attendant upon a state of warfare, and, therefore, that the proposed legislative regulation, professing to be founded upon, but actually exceeding an average taken from the last twenty-one years would be peculiarly objectionable.”
- “(4) That a Committee of the House of Commons has reported that in Great Britain there has been a great increase of tillage in Ireland during the same period, which has been estimated by many skilful persons at nearly one-fourth, which statements connected with the circumstance of our imports of grain, having of late been extremely limited, evidently show that the present moderate

price of corn is not the result of competition proceeding from foreign importations but a consequence of an extended and improved system of agriculture and the abundance of the last year's harvest."

"(5) That as the same Committee have further reported that, in consequence of a progressive improvement of tillage, this country, in the year 1812, raised a sufficient quantity of grain for the supply of its own inhabitants, notwithstanding an increased population, and the waste occasioned by a state of warfare, it does not appear to this Chamber that the present circumstances of the agriculture of this country require any further legislative encouragement."

"(6) That the Chamber is still further confirmed in the opinion that no additional legislative encouragement is necessary, by a report to the Board of Agriculture, that the average increase of rent on arable land throughout the kingdom between the years 1790 and 1803 was 40 per cent. on the rents of 1790, since which period such increase has been rapidly progressive while the value of property of most other descriptions has been greatly deteriorated."

Upon these conclusions the Chamber decided to petition both Houses of Parliament praying that "no immediate extension may be made to the prices at which importations of grain are permitted under the Act 44th of George III., and the petitions were sent to Lord Calthorpe and the members for the County for presentation.

United
States of
America.

In May, 1814, it was decided to transmit to the member for the County, for presentation to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent a petition with regard to British property sequestrated by order of the American Government and Courts. In this petition it was recited that in consequence of the repeal of Orders in Council of the summer of the year 1812 merchants of Birmingham and other parts of the United Kingdom shipped a large amount of British manufactures to the United States of America in American ships sailing with British licences; that the

greatest part of this property was shipped in the execution of orders received from American citizens, and the remainder on account of British subjects, "in full reliance upon the repeated declarations of the American Government that the repeal of the non-importation Act would be the immediate consequence of the revocation of the orders in Council, and that property so shipped would be thereby rendered secure from any seizure on the part of the American Government;" and that, nevertheless, the whole of the property so shipped and amounting (in value) to several millions sterling had been seized and sequestrated. The prayer of the petition was that his Royal Highness would be pleased, in any negotiation for peace which might be opened with the United States of America, to stipulate for the restoration of such part of the sequestrated property as may not have been placed under bond or for the cancelling of all such bonds as remained outstanding, and the repayment of any of them that may have been enforced.

In the same year the Chamber presented to the Prince Regent a petition praying that in any treaty with the Government of Spain such commercial regulations for the export of British manufactures to the Spanish Colonies [in South America] might be stipulated for, as in the "superior judgment" of his Royal Highness might be deemed feasible and expedient. It appears from the terms of the petition that considerable trade took place with the Spanish South American Colonies; that the regulations previously enforced by the Spanish Government operated almost as a prohibition to "the consumption of British manufactures" in those Colonies; that the Chamber was apprehensive that "in the settlement of affairs in the Mother Country—unless some provision were made to the contrary by the British Government—such regulations might be restored or adopted as would prove highly prejudicial to the manufacturing interest of the country; that the merchants of the United Kingdom had latterly suspended their orders for the Spanish Colonies under the apprehension that their property might be liable to confiscation on the return of the Mother Country to the old Colonial system; and that, in the

South
American
Trade.

opinion of the Chamber, the great export of British manufactures to the Spanish Colonies which had been experienced during the intercourse then already established," subjected, as it was, to many serious impediments, convinced the Chamber that if this intercourse could be established upon liberal principles it would "be productive of the highest national advantage."

First Annual
Report.

In the concluding paragraph of their first annual report the Committee of the Chamber said they trusted that the summary of their proceedings would convince the subscribers that they had not been inattentive to the important interests committed to their care, and that they were unwilling to conclude without expressing their firm conviction founded on experience that the Chamber was well calculated to effect the objects of its establishment by promoting the manufacturing and commercial prosperity of the Town of Birmingham.

Bits and
Stirrups, &c.
Wrought v.
Cast Iron.

In the autumn of 1814 memorials were received from the manufacturers of bits and stirrups, etc., complaining of the injurious consequences resulting from the use of cast-iron. These memorials were presented to the Committee by a deputation who presented several specimens, and the matter was referred to a Sub-Committee "to confer with the platers on the subject and to consider if any assistance could be properly rendered" by the Chamber "in redressing the grievance." The Sub-Committee subsequently reported that "upon conferring with several respectable platers" it appeared that the substitution of cast-iron in most articles had been of essential advantage to the trade and in no way injurious to the public; but that the uses of it in bits and stirrups and some other articles was "dangerous and should be discouraged." It further appeared to the Sub-Committee that if the manufacturers of wrought-iron bits and stirrups, etc., could be induced to lower their prices, the evil complained of by them would be in a great degree remedied, "since from the calculation of a respectable plater it resulted that if only one article in twelve broke in plating there could be no advantage derived from the use of cast iron." The Sub-Committee further reported that from information received they were of opinion

that the situation of the manufacturers of wrought-iron rough work was "not so much owing to the use of cast-iron as to the depressed state of the trade in general." In view of these circumstances the Chamber informed the memorialists that they could take no action.

CHAPTER X.

1815.

Another institution in Birmingham which celebrates its Centenary this year is the Proof House. On the 6th February, 1815, the Chamber of Manufactures and Commerce received a letter from "several respectable gun-makers of this town and neighbourhood" calling attention to the proceedings of the wardens of the Proof House, which they considered to be "likely to be injurious to the manufacturing interests." It was stated in this letter that in pursuance of the statutory powers conferred by the Act of 1813 relating to the proving of gun barrels, a Proof House had been established, and the Guardians or Wardens were authorised to—and did—exact any sum not exceeding one shilling for proving each barrel; whereas the charge made by the London Proof House was only 4½d. each for common barrels. As a result of this it appeared that

"many gun-makers in this town in consequence of the extravagant charge of one shilling per barrel . . . found it expedient, as a matter of economy, to send their barrels to London, the whole amount of expense, including the charge of proving and carriage to and from London being less than the charge for proving at the establishment in Birmingham."

The wardens of the Proof House, not being satisfied as to the powers conferred upon them, introduced a Bill into Parliament which, at the time the above letter was written, had passed the first reading, and which contained

a clause for preventing any manufacturer residing within 20 miles of Birmingham from selling any barrel which had not been proved in Birmingham. Whilst fully approving of the "salutary provisions contained in the present Act," and not entertaining any great objection to the power to charge "so extravagant a charge as one shilling per barrel," and

"well knowing that they could in a great measure obviate the inconvenience by having recourse to other authorised Proof Houses,"

the gunmakers responsible for the letter (twenty-one in number) expressed the conviction that a most serious injury would be sustained by the trade if the "present Bill" were permitted to pass into law as an exclusive privilege would thereby be granted to the wardens,

"by which they will be enabled to impose such an extravagant and oppressive tax upon the makers of barrels as must ultimately drive that branch of manufacture from the town and neighbourhood to some other district in which it will not be subject to the same disadvantage."

The Chamber was, therefore, earnestly solicited to "oppose so injurious and unreasonable a monopoly," but as the wardens subsequently withdrew the "obnoxious clauses" no action was taken in the matter.

Inspection
of Manufac-
tories
discouraged.

Many criticisms have even in recent years been passed upon manufacturers for declining to permit strangers to view their industrial processes. The present volume is not the place to discuss the wisdom or otherwise of this attitude, but it is interesting to notice that in 1815 the matter was considered by a special committee of gentlemen appointed by the Chamber for the purpose, who reported that, representations had been repeatedly made that foreigners had abused the "privilege hitherto allowed them by the liberality of the manufacturers of this town" by visiting their works for the purpose of procuring models of the machinery and learning the "secrets of the various arts," with a view of "introducing these valuable results of British labour and ingenuity into foreign countries." As a result of this report the Committee of the Chamber of Commerce expressed the

opinion "that manufacturers would do well to secure themselves from the injury arising from such an abuse of their liberality, either by wholly abstaining from showing their manufactories or by adopting any other mode that may appear to them more eligible for the protection of their important interests."

Among other measures which occupied the attention of the Committee was "the proposed imposition of duties upon windows and rents of warehouses and workshops, and also an increase of the existing duties upon servants employed in trade." In their annual report the Committee stated that as the result of their inquiry it appeared evident that the duties intended to be imposed upon the windows of manufactories would in a great number of instances press much more severely upon those who were to pay them than even the Property Tax had done, and that they would in many cases fall most heavily upon such manufacturers as were least capable of supporting them. The Committee went on to say that these circumstances combined with the consideration that many of our manufacturers were "already loaded with expenses almost too heavy to enable them to find a sale in foreign markets," induced them to present a Memorial to the Executive Government and to co-operate with the delegates of other manufacturing districts in opposing "so injurious a tax." It appears from the report that the proposal was abandoned in contemplation of the temporary re-enactment of the Property Tax, but the Committee confidently hoped "that the remonstrances which were made upon the occasion" would have the effect of "preventing the Executive Government from again having recourse to so objectionable a subject for taxation."

On May 27th, 1815, a petition was signed for presentation to the "Rt. Hon. Nicholas Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer, etc., etc., etc.," in which it was stated that the Directors of the Chamber felt "much alarm and uneasiness at the proposed increase of the taxes on stamps and inland bills of exchange and promissory notes, and at the multiplication of the classes thereof." In the petition they proceeded to say that the "present stamps" were a very large "burthen" upon

trade and were "already" so high as to induce many bankers and other persons to substitute Bills already drawn for new Bills to the great injury of the revenue, and that "in their apprehension this practice will become much more general if the tax should be increased." The opinion was also expressed that an advance in the duties referred to would induce tradesmen in general to draw Bills at longer dates than they would otherwise have done, which would not only render business transactions more insecure, but would also injuriously affect the revenue, "since a Bill at three months date, by continuing in circulation three times as long as a Bill at one month, would enable one stamp to effect as many payments as would otherwise employ three stamps." It was further stated that an advance of stamp duties would induce many persons to take longer credit on condition of paying demands upon them at the end of two or three months beyond the usual credit, "thereby dispensing with the use of any Bill stamp whatever" to the further great injury to the revenue. From the petition it also appeared that the "number of classes of Bill stamps" was "a general inconvenience to trade," and occasioned "many mistakes," rendering people liable to heavy losses and penalties if the stamps used happened to be less in value than those required by law, and the Chamber felt that "if those classes should be increased the difficulties and dangers" would be increased also—"an inconvenience which would operate as a further inducement to pay away Bills previously in circulation."

CHAPTER XI.

1816.

**Factory
Legislation.**

The most interesting and important subject discussed by the Chamber in 1816 was the Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Robert Peel for "regulating

and inspecting "all factories containing twenty or more persons under 18 years of age, and a petition with reference to the matter was presented to the House of Commons. The object of the Bill was to extend to all "manufactories whatever" the provisions of an Act passed in the reign of "his present Majesty" entitled: "An Act for the Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices and others employed in Cotton and other Mills and Cotton and other Factories." In their petition the Chamber asserted that they were not aware that any of the abuses contemplated by the Bill were to be found "in the numerous manufactories of this town and neighbourhood," and that "in case such abuses should at any time occur," the existing law gave ample power to magistrates or parochial authorities to correct or remove them. It was further stated that the manufactories of Birmingham afforded various employments for children under ten years of age which did not require any bodily exertion detrimental to health, but which greatly contributed to form early habits of attention and general industry; and that the clause which prohibited entirely the employment of such children would have the effect of depriving most of the industrious mechanics of the town and neighbourhood "of those resources in the earnings of their children which have contributed to the decent maintenance and education of their growing families, who, in a great number of instances, have been employed under their own immediate notice and superintendence at an earlier age than ten years." Continuing their petition the Chamber said that the clause limiting the hours of employment of all persons under 18 years of age, would be "most inconveniently felt in many of the large manufactories in which the hours of attendance were necessarily dependent upon certain processes which, in many cases, it was impossible to control in regard to the precise hours of work. It was further asserted that the opportunities for education which had been so amply provided in almost every manufacturing town and particularly in Birmingham, were "much more efficient than could be expected from the proposed compulsory regulations," and that the clause in the Bill providing for

the instruction of children in the manufactories would have the effect of introducing an "embarrassing innovation" and "being compulsive" would, in many instances, "be reluctantly complied with and probably attended with little if any practical advantage." The Chamber then proceeded to assert that the proposed appointment of visitors (of factories) was altogether uncalled for in Birmingham, and would be liable to "great abuse from the vexatious interference manufacturers would experience and the expense to which their operations would be subject." The proposal to vest in the visitors certain powers, "by substituting legislative authority for that of parents and masters," was objected to on the ground that it "must tend to weaken and destroy that salutary control" which was requisite for promoting habits of regularity and industry and for maintaining that proper degree of subordination upon which the well-being of society materially depended. Concluding their petition the Chamber urged that if any of the abuses contemplated by the Bill existed in certain branches of manufacture to such an extent as to require legislative interference, such interference should be limited to those branches, "the general provisions of the present Bill appearing to your petitioners in their application to their immediate neighbourhood to be erroneous in principle, vexatious and embarrassing to the manufacturer, inquisitorial in their nature, oppressive to the labouring class, and in their tendency injuriously affecting the public interests."

Continuance
of Chamber.

In their annual report for the year the Committee expressed to the general meeting their opinion of the utility of a continuance of the Chamber to the manufactures and commerce of the town and neighbourhood, especially during the unsettled state in which they yet remained in consequence of the changes which had taken place in the political relations of the country with the Continent of Europe. There is nothing in the records to indicate the causes which operated to produce this opinion, but it would seem that there had grown up a feeling of apathy which the Committee were anxious to remove. That the continuance of the Chamber was fully justified will be clear from the interesting records which are referred to in the following pages.

CHAPTER XII.

1817.

Early in the year 1817 a memorial was addressed to the Lord Commissioners of the Treasury stating that the Chamber was deeply impressed with the increasing scarcity and dearness of all kinds of grain and with the urgent necessity of obtaining as large an additional supply as possible by importation. In former seasons of scarcity it appeared that great quantities of rice were imported from foreign countries, and particularly from the United States of America, and the Chamber was convinced that large supplies might then be obtained from the United States if facilities were afforded for its importation. The duty at that time imposed on rice was no less than 20/- per cwt., which was regarded not only as prohibitive "to its more general importation," but as operating so to raise the price of what little was imported "as to prevent its being commonly used as an article of food." As a result the inhabitants of the town were "prevented from obtaining a supply for the relief of the many thousands of persons unemployed and in great want of sustenance," and large quantities of rice ordered to British ports from the United States, in anticipation of the repeal of the duty were sold to be exported to France. Scarcity of Grain.

From the text of the memorial it appears that it had also come to the knowledge of the Chamber that rye flour which had been imported into the country was not "suffered to be sold for home consumption" because the Act which provided for the importation of wheat, wheat flour, rye corn, etc., did not provide for rye flour, "to the great loss of this country at the present time of distress." The Chamber went on to remind the Lord Commissioners that in former times of scarcity the duty upon rice was "taken off or materially reduced with very beneficial consequences to the country," and that in their (the Chamber's) opinion, a similar necessity then existed "aggravated by the unexampled distress and want of

occupation of the manufacturing class." In view of all this the Chamber urged that the excessive duty on corn should be repealed and that permission should be given for the introduction of rye flour as an "article of domestic consumption."

Writs of
Extents in
Aid.

The Chamber had under consideration the question of the variety of cases wherein writs of extents in aid had been obtained for purposes altogether foreign to the interests of the Crown, and to secure to persons in any manner indebted to his Majesty's Government an unfair preference in the division of the property of insolvent estates. Deeply impressed with the evil tendency of such practices and convinced that if longer permitted they would diminish the confidence between different traders which was so essential to the maintenance of the commercial prosperity of the country, the Chamber addressed a petition to the House of Commons on the matter, urging the House to take into serious consideration the inconvenience and injustice to which traders were exposed on account of the undue advantage over "Creditors in General" which were derived by persons under engagement to the Crown, and to adopt such "measures in relief" as might seem proper. The Chamber expressed their apprehension that any legislative enactment which would merely limit the attachment of a writ of extent in aid to such amount of debt only as should be equal to the sum due to the Crown from the party "using" the writ would be the means of extending the evils at present complained of, inasmuch as it would give a positive legislative sanction to a practice which had previously been reprobated as unjust and partial, and thereby diminish that obloquy which had hitherto operated as a check to its more general abuse. The opinion was then expressed that the interests of the Crown would be sufficiently secured and the abuse of the power derived from the extents in aid effectually prevented if such writs were issued by the Government only and against such persons only as were immediately indebted to the Crown by bond or otherwise, except in cases where full recovery of the Crown debt could not be thus obtained and then against the debtors of such persons for the deficiency.

The petition was presented by D. S. Dugdale, Esq., and was referred by the House to the Committee which was sitting upon the subject, and the Committee subsequently reported that a modification was made so as to mitigate in some degree the abuse of the privilege complained of.

In 1817 Mr. Sergeant Onslow introduced a Bill for Usury Laws. the repeal of the laws then in force limiting the rate of interest on borrowed money, and upon this being considered the Chamber passed a series of resolutions, in the first of which they expressed the opinion that the terms of private contracts between individuals for the use of money might be left to the discretion of the parties interested as safely as any contract for the price of any other commodity whatever. The second resolution was to the effect that the only proper and reasonable rate of interest on money was that which was proportionate to the advantage to be derived from its use, and that such rate was more likely to be fairly adjusted by the interested competition of individuals amongst one another than by any compulsory legislative enactment. In the third resolution it was stated that experience had proved that the then existing laws relative to the limitation of the rate of interest had not only been found to be incapable of accomplishing the avowed object of their enactment, but had had a tendency to raise the market rate of interest above its natural level, "inasmuch as that numerous instances have occurred, and particularly since the commencement of the present depressed value of property, wherein persons who have been precluded by law from borrowing money to meet their pending engagements at such higher rate than 5 per cent. at which it might have been obtained, have been compelled to resort to the expensive expedient of raising money on annuity or otherwise on terms much more disadvantageous." On these resolutions a petition was prepared in support of Mr. Sergeant Onslow's Bill and presented to the House of Commons by Sir Charles Mordaunt, Bart., and D. S. Dugdale, Esq., the Members for the County.

CHAPTER XIII.

1818.

Factory
Legislation.

In this year Sir Robert Peel introduced a Bill for fixing limits to the ages at which children should be employed in cotton factories and for controlling the hours of labour of all persons under sixteen years of age that might be employed therein. On considering this Bill the Chamber passed a resolution to the effect that although they had no means of judging how far the proposed measure of legislative control might be rendered necessary by the condition of persons working in cotton factories, they thought it proper to express to the legislature their alarm at the prospect of a precedent being established which might thereafter be extended to the manufactories of Birmingham and neighbourhood. A petition on the subject was presented to the House of Commons, and the Committee subsequently reported that the Bill was passed with certain modifications, and that the manufactories of Birmingham were not included in its regulations.

The year 1818 was evidently a very quiet one, as only two meetings were held, and the above subject was the only one upon which definite action was taken.

CHAPTER XIV.

1819.

No meeting of the Chamber appears to have been held in 1819 until May 26th, but after that date quite a number of meetings took place, at which several important and interesting subjects were discussed.

The depressed state of commerce having engaged the serious attention of the Committee, and its appearing to them that no substantial permanent improvement could be "rationally looked for but by the adoption of a more liberal and enlightened system of commercial intercourse with foreign countries," the Committee expressed its anxiety to awaken the attention of the Chamber "and of their fellow townsmen" to the expediency of an alteration in the commercial policy of the country. Impressed with the conviction that the desired improvement could only be obtained by the removal of "those embarrassing obstructions which by preventing the importation of the products of neighbouring countries at present check the enterprise of our manufacturers and merchants in foreign markets" the Committee were particularly desirous that a representation should be made to his Majesty's Ministers of the great advantages that would accrue to the interests of the town "by affording greater facilities in opening a more extended market for the produce of the manufacturing industry of its inhabitants, and particularly in France, the trade of which on account of its contiguity and other causes was formerly so beneficial to the Town of Birmingham and its neighbourhood." A memorial to the Lords of the Treasury was subsequently prepared, in which the Chamber stated that whilst they were impressed with the conviction that the Government had been "solicitous to encourage and protect the commerce of this country," it appeared that the "long established maxims of commercial policy generally acted upon, and frequently in compliance with the partial views of the trading part of the community" had been "inconsistent with the comprehensive and enlightened principles of political economy." The Lords of the Treasury were therefore urged to adopt such measures as might to their wisdom appear most efficient for establishing a commercial intercourse with France upon the most liberal basis—"an event which from the recollection of the lucrative trade formerly carried on between the two countries in which the Town of Birmingham largely participated, could not fail to be exceedingly beneficial to the interests of both nations." This important

Commercial
Depression.Commercial
Policy.

memorial was printed for distribution, and the Committee subsequently observed with much gratification that their opinions had received the concurrence of the manufacturing and commercial towns of the country, and that many of them had petitioned the legislature to the same effect. The Committee also observed that these representations had "happily obtained from the Government of the country that serious attention which the importance of the subject required," and they therefore decided to emphasize their views by petitions to both Houses of Parliament.

Members of the Chamber In the year 1819 we find amongst the records the first official list of the members of the Chamber as follows:—

SUBSCRIBERS TO THE CHAMBER OF MANUFACTURES AND COMMERCE.

Attwood, Thomas	Biddle, John	Cox, William
Ashmore, Anderton	Barrs and Hands	Cocks, Thomas
Attwood, George	Baker, James	Chance, Wm., Jr.
Amphlett, Richard	Bragg, George	Capper, W. W.
Attwood, Mathias	Blakeway, Wm.	Corrie, Jonah
Attwood, J. H.	Bond, J. C.	Corrie, John
Armitage, James	Bernbridge, Thos.	Carr, Edward
Ainsworth, J.	Bardell, Edwd.	Cadbury, Richard
Alberton, Thomas	Barnett, George	Dickinson, John
Armfield, Samuel	Bancks, Wm.	Docker, Charles
Allport, Edward	Barnes, Samuel	Dunderdale & Co.
Bates, W. H.	Bingham, James	Deeley, Joseph
Benson, Joseph	Beddington, Wm.	Eames, Josiah
Bagnall, Richard	Beale, Wm.	Ellis, David
Baldwin, Anthony	Boyce, James	Freeth, B. & Co.
Belles, James	Crompton, J. W.	Frears, William
Banister, William	Clark, Thomas	Francis, William
Berry, John	Cook, Benjamin	Pickering, J.
Fiddian & Co.	Lloyd, Charles	Parkes, Zachariah
Galton, Samuel	Lawrence, J. T.	Ryland, Thos.
Galton, S. T.	Ledsam, Fredk.	Richard, John
Goddington, James	Lawrence, Jno.	Richards, John
Godwin, W.	Lloyd, Samuel	Redfern, Wm.

Grundy, Morris	Leonard, J. & Sons	Ryland, John
Gibbins, Brueton	Lloyd, James	(High Street)
Gill, Joseph	Luckcock, Jas.	Rowlinson, John
Hawkes, T. L.	Lilly, Joseph	Ryland, John
Hobday, Samuel	Linwood, John	(Temple Street)
Hunt, W. and J.	Minshull, Geo.	Robins, Joseph
Heptinstall	Mitchell, Robt.	(Temple Street)
Halliday, Thos.	McKenzie, Wm.	Richards, Thos.
Harwood, Thos.	Moilliet, J. L.	Rotton, John
Hipkins, James	Messenger, Thos.	Renshaw, Wm.
Hunt, T. Y.	Mason, Oliver	Ross, Thomas
Hands, Isaac J.	Marston, H.	Ridout, John
Hawkesley, James	Moore, Joseph	Spooner, Richard
Hughes, Richard	Moxham, Thos.	Smith, Timothy
Harris, John J.	Meeson & Co.	Scholefield, Josh.
Hipwood, William	Maullin, Wm.	Small, Thos.
Hill, Daniel	Moore, John	Sheppard, Fras.
Harrison, Wm.	Neville, Wm.	Shorthouse, Wm.
Horton, Joseph	Osler, Thos.	Smith, Richard
Hickling, S.	Peyton, Richard	Shakespeare, Wm.
Jervis, S. H.	Patten, William	Palmer, John
Jones, John, & Son	Palmer, Josh.	Selkirk, Wm.
James, P. M.	Pemberton, Thos.	Smith, Robert
Johnson, Owen	(Livery St.)	Sanders, Mark
Jones, George	Phipson, J. W.	Smith, Samuel
Johnson, Joseph	Price, Wm.	Taylor, Wm.
Jennens & Aker	Pearson, Jas.	Thomason, Edwd.
Jenkins, William	Pemberton, Thos.	Tutin, S.
Kendall, John	(Snow Hill.)	Turner, John
Kettle, Thos.	Potts, Thos.	Thompson
Kenrick, Richard	Poolton, Wm.	Fregent, J. P.
Tibbetts, Josh.	Phipson, Wm.	Tookey, John
Tutin, Wm., & Son	Turton, James	Whitehouse, Ed.
Webster, Joseph	Walton and	Wise, R. W.
Williams, Jno.	Mountford	Yates, Thos.
	Whitfield & Sons	Yates, William
	Willmore, Josh.	
	Woodward, Geo.	

CHAPTER XV.

1820.

**Recovery of
Debts.**

Early in this year a Sub-Committee of the Chamber presented a report on the subject of the difficulties experienced in the recovery of debts from persons having partners abroad. The co-operation of other towns was sought in an attempt to obtain remedial legislation, but only Manchester and Liverpool responded. As an early dissolution of Parliament was contemplated it did not appear that any further proceeding could immediately be originated to advantage, but the Committee said they were "increasingly convinced" that the subject was deserving of the "persevering notice" of the Chamber, and at the opening of the new Parliament they would recommend that whether other towns were disposed to give them assistance or not, application should be made for such an alteration of the law as would obviate the difficulties so justly complained of and give a greater security to the creditors of houses having partners resident abroad.

**Commercial
Policy.**

The subject of the commercial policy of the country was again considered, and petitions were presented to both Houses of Parliament, setting forth the view of the Chamber. In the opening clause of the petition the Chamber stated that the district had for some time past been suffering greatly from depression in trade, and that this depression had "lately increased to an alarming extent." They did not attempt to explain the various causes which might have produced the distress, but they were of opinion "that much of it may be justly attributed to the restrictive and prohibitory system so universally prevalent in commercial nations and to which the example of this country has mainly contributed." Continuing, the Chamber stated that they considered the legitimate object of commerce, whether between individuals or nations, to be the exchange of those articles which they can respectively produce at the

cheapest rate, and were convinced that the regulations which limited the opportunities "of obtaining for their productions such valuable returns as foreign markets could supply" had not only had the injurious effect of discouraging a foreign demand for them, but had also tended to prevent such increased domestic consumption as might be reasonably expected in a country "enriched by an unfettered foreign commerce." Following up this line of argument the Chamber, in their petition, proceeded to say that "in common with other inhabitants of this country" they were daily benefitted by the free exchange of articles manufactured or raised in "rival districts of this kingdom," and that they were convinced that the principles constituting the foundation of the prohibitory laws which had "unhappily repressed our foreign commerce" were equally applicable to the dealings between the various districts of the same nation, "and, if still further pursued, must lead to the manifestly absurd conclusion that each individual is interested in producing by his own labour every article he may require rather than purchase it of another." After referring to the prices of commodities, "artificially raised by the exclusion of foreign competition," the Chamber went on to express their regret and alarm at the renewed attempts of the landed proprietors to obtain additional protective laws "whereby the mischievous effects of the prohibitory system . . . would be still further aggravated." In the penultimate clause of the memorial the Chamber said they were

"inclined to believe that the gradual abolition by this great commercial nation of the many impolitic and injurious restrictions upon its trade cannot fail to have a salutary effect in opening the eyes of neighbouring nations to their true interests and preparing the way to the general establishment of an unembarrassed and beneficial intercourse throughout the civilised world—an event which by inducing a mutual reliance for prosperity upon each others resources must afford the best security for the maintenance of universal tranquility among nations."

Finally, the Chamber urged the Houses of Parliament

to resist the proposed increase of restrictions on the importation of foreign corn, and suggested the appointment of a Committee "for the purpose of revising" the commercial system of the country.

Legislative
Interference
with
Manufac-
tures.

In 1814 the Chamber had taken considerable pains to secure the successful efforts of Mr. Sergeant Onslow to repeal the Statute of Apprenticeship, "by which the skill and industry of our artisans were exposed to great discouragement." In their annual report for 1820 the Committee expressed their concern at observing an attempt made to introduce into Parliament a Bill containing a clause for the future exclusion from a particular branch of manufacture all workmen who had not served a regular apprenticeship. The report continues :—

"They felt it to be their duty to remonstrate against this attempt at a partial revival of the objectionable statute which had been so recently repealed, and have since had the satisfaction of learning that Mr. Sergeant Onslow has exerted himself to prevent the facility of introducing into Acts of Parliament affecting manufactures any improper regulations, by proposing in the House of Commons a standing order prohibiting the first reading of any Bill for the regulation of manufactures until after the report of a Select Committee upon such intended regulations."

A petition upon this matter was presented to the House of Commons, in which it was stated that such clauses as that referred to would probably not be inserted in Bills if the persons likely to be affected were previously consulted.

CHAPTER XVI.

1821.

Foreign
Trade.
Commercial
Policy.

In 1821 the Chamber expressed their gratification at observing the "great and solicitous attention" bestowed by the Committees of both Houses of Parliament in their

examination of evidence upon the expediency of moving many of the obstacles then existing to the extension of the foreign trade of the country—an object which, as has been seen, had engaged the early attention of the Chamber, and which had since been supported by petitions to the legislature from most of the principal manufacturing and commercial towns of the country. The Committee of the Chamber, considering the future prosperity of the trade of the district in common with that of the country in general would be materially influenced by the result of the investigations, particularly invited the attention of members through the medium of their annual report to the interesting reports upon foreign trade, which had been printed by order of the Committees of the Houses of Parliament appointed to take the subject into consideration. Continuing, the Committee said they “felt much satisfaction in the conviction that an impression had been made upon the legislature most favourable to a more extended and unembarrassed intercourse with the East Indies,” and they ventured to anticipate, from a perusal of the reports referred to, and from which they selected and printed certain passages, that the time was not far distant when that part of the trade to China and the East Indies, from which the private British trader had been previously excluded, would be rendered “as accessible to our countrymen” as it had been to the citizens of the United States of America.

The extracts from the report of the House of ^{Parliament-}Lords, to which reference has been made, related solely ^{ary Reports.} to trade with the East Indies, but that taken from the House of Commons report covered a somewhat wider field. The Select Committee observed that the subjects of foreign nations, whether European or American, were in possession of privileges far more extensive than those which were enjoyed by his Majesty's subjects generally, and greater as to many branches of circuitous and foreign trade than had been accorded to the East India Company itself. The report continues:—

“To relieve the commerce and shipping of this country from a situation of such comparative disadvantage (for the continuance of which your Committee can

discover no sufficient reason) they feel the expediency of some measure, the principle of which will be to allow British subjects as well as private traders of the East India Company to carry on every sort of traffic between India and foreign countries (with the exception of the trade in tea, and that with the United Kingdom and the British Colonies with which they do not propose any interference) which foreigners are now capable of carrying on; and have, therefore, come to the following resolution, which they submit to the House:—*Resolved*—That it is expedient to permit his Majesty's subjects to carry on trade and traffic, directly and circuitously, between any ports within the limits of the East India Company's charter (except the Dominions of the Emperor of China) and any port or ports beyond the limits of the said charter belonging to any state or countries in amity with his Majesty."

Concluding their report the Committee of the Chamber observed that as it was probable that the Committees appointed to consider the means of maintaining and improving the foreign trade of the country would be revived in both Houses of Parliament in the next session it was desirable that the attention of Commercial Institutions should be particularly directed to proceedings so important in their nature and so interesting in their consequences, and recommended that instructions to that effect should be given to the Directors of the Chamber for the then ensuing year. At the Annual Meeting the Directors were requested to petition both Houses of Parliament for a revival of the Select Committees "whose proceedings were marked with so much ability and produced so much valuable information on the foreign commerce of this country."

CHAPTER XVII.

1822—3.

No Annual General Meeting of the Chamber appears to have been held in 1822, and the principal action taken was the preparation and presentation of the petitions to the Houses of Parliament praying them to re-appoint the Select Committees on foreign trade. Copies of these petitions were sent to Liverpool, Manchester, and other commercial towns with the view of securing their support.

A Bill for the amendment of the law with regard to insolvent debtors having been considered, the Chamber in 1822 passed a resolution recognising that the Bill, if enacted, would make a considerable improvement in the law, but expressing the view that further provisions were necessary for the security of creditors, and that in particular it would be highly desirable "that the place of the debtor's examination should in all cases be as near as possible to the place of his dealings." The county members were asked to endeavour to get a clause inserted in the Bill for the attainment of this object.

In the session of 1822 Mr. Wallace, of the Board of Trade, introduced certain Bills which the Chamber "observed with great pleasure" appeared to them to be calculated to extend the trade of the country; and "highly approving the general principles of these Bills" the Chamber presented a petition in support of them to the House of Commons. The Bills were as follows:—

- (1) "A Bill to repeal divers antient statutes and parts of statutes, so far as relates to the importation and exportation of goods and merchandise from and to foreign countries."
- (2) "A Bill to repeal certain acts and parts of acts relating to the importation of goods and merchandise."
- (3) "A Bill for the encouragement of navigation and commerce by regulating the importation of goods and merchandise so far as relates to the

Insolvent
Debtors.Removal
and Trade
Obstruction.

countries from whence and the ships in which such importation shall be made."

- (4) "A Bill to regulate the trade between his Majesty's possessions in America and the West Indies and other parts of the world."

In the same petition the Chamber observed that they believed the consumption of British manufactures in the East Indies was susceptible of considerable extension, and expressed a hope that as sugar had become a product of considerable importance to the East Indies the "protecting duty" on it when imported here would not be continued, but that such encouragement would be given to the importation of that and other articles which were the native produce "of so valuable a part of the British Dominions" as might tend to increase their consumption in the United Kingdom, and thereby advance the improvement of its manufactures and commerce. The Chamber further urged that the principles upon which the Bills referred to were founded should be applied "to all our foreign commercial relations" as the most effectual means of advancing the commercial prosperity of this country.

British
Beads.

Early in 1823 Mr. Thomas Osler called the attention of the Chamber to a clause in the Warehousing Bill which, in his opinion, would interfere with the exportation of British beads to the British Colonies by permitting foreign beads to be warehoused in Great Britain and exported to the Colonies without paying the Home Consumption Duty. On reference to a copy of the Bill, which was ordered to be printed on the 24th March, 1823, it appeared to the Chamber that the clauses referring to glass beads had been subsequently so modified as not to permit foreign beads to be warehoused in Great Britain and then exported to the Colonies. Mr. Osler then laid before the Chamber various specimens of glass beads and represented that the export of "this branch of manufacture" was materially impeded by the drawback of the duty on glass not being allowed, and as it seemed to the Chamber that a great extension of this branch of trade would arise if the drawback were allowed, Mr. Osler was requested to

prepare a statement of the facts with a view to some representations being made to the Government.

The attention of the Chamber was called to the injurious effect on the commerce of the country caused by the extra duty levied on sugar imported from the East Indies, and its co-operation in bringing the matter under the consideration of Parliament was strongly solicited. Being impressed with the great advantage likely to be derived "from the extension of the liberal principles of commercial intercourse recently recognised and acted upon by the British legislature," and being decidedly of opinion that the restrictive duties then existing on East Indian sugars particularly required revision, a petition was drawn up and presented to Parliament urging the "consideration (of) the propriety of discontinuing the said protecting duty," and advocating generally the revision of the laws which regulated our Colonial commerce with the view of removing restrictions which still prevented "our several Colonies from deriving the full benefits of the local and natural advantages" which they still respectively possessed. In this petition the Chamber expressed the opinion that the demand for the manufactures of this country in the East Indies had "no other assignable limits than the difficulty of making suitable returns—a difficulty principally occasioned by the high duties upon some of the most important productions of those Colonies."

In their annual report the Committee observed that the Select Committees of the Houses of Parliament on Foreign Trade, having been re-appointed, prosecuted their inquiries into the important subjects referred to them, and that their invaluable labours had been followed up by a revision of the commercial policy of the country, which promised to confer the greatest benefits upon foreign trade. From this investigation there resulted the introduction of a Bill for repealing many Acts of Parliament by which foreign commerce had theretofore been restricted and embarrassed, and the Chamber had "the satisfaction of learning that this Bill," in favour of which the Chamber had petitioned, had received the sanction of the legislature.

In concluding their annual report the Committee of the Chamber said they could not “refrain, on the present occasion, from expressing the high gratification they have felt in observing the just and liberal commercial system now adopted by the Government of this country—a system founded on the principle of reciprocity, which your Committee think will be productive of effects most beneficial to the merchants and manufacturers of Great Britain, and also promote the industry of foreign nations, and the improvement, tranquility, and happiness of mankind.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

1824—5.

As in 1822 no Annual-General Meeting appears to have been held in 1824, notwithstanding the fact that most interesting business was transacted. In this twentieth century, when so much is expected from a Chamber of Commerce, it may appear that the volume of work performed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was very small, but a little thoughtful consideration will be sufficient to shew the reasonable man that even at that time first-hand advice was being given to the legislature on matters of vital importance to the Town of Birmingham in particular and the country in general, and that the attainment of success in any one of these was more than sufficient to justify the subscriptions paid by members of the Chamber.

Emigration
of Artisans.
Combina-
tions of
Workmen.
Exportation
of
Machinery.

In 1824 the High Bailiff invited the attention of the Chamber to a communication he had received from the Chairman of the Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the expediency of the then existing laws for controlling the emigration of artisans, combinations of workmen, and the exportation of machinery. Upon these matters, affecting, as they did, so many persons employed “in this manufacturing district,” it was con-

sidered right to take the opinions of the members of the Chamber generally, and, accordingly, a meeting was convened, which was attended by many of the principal manufacturers, including persons extensively engaged in the "fabrication" of machinery.

With regard to the emigration of artisans the Committee of the Chamber, "after a full and mature consideration of opinion," observed that the prosperity of our manufacturing interests was "essentially dependent upon our intelligent and ingenious artisans," and that "the removing of the restrictions to their emigration would be highly injurious to those interests which had so materially contributed to the strength and greatness of the country." It was also observed that, notwithstanding the provisions of the then existing laws, many artisans did actually emigrate, but that in spite of this the laws were "to a considerable extent effective." At the subsequent meeting of members it was *resolved*—"That although this meeting considers the laws which restrain the emigration of artisans as wise in principle, it is of opinion that some of the details might be altered to advantage, and particularly that much benefit would accrue from repealing or modifying those enactments which only tended to prevent the return of artisans." Apparently the discussion of this subject occupied a considerable time, for the meeting was afterwards adjourned for three days.

At the adjourned meeting the other subjects above referred to were discussed, and it was *resolved*—"That although this meeting feels very reluctant to advocate any restrictive system of commercial policy, yet, looking comprehensively at the present situation of this country relatively with others and the long period during which that system has prevailed, it is convinced that any change must be made with great caution, and in reference to the laws prohibiting the exportation of machinery, it is of opinion that notwithstanding those laws, require revision and amendment, the total repeal of them under existing circumstances would be exceedingly injurious to the manufactures and commerce of the country, and that such repeal would confer great benefits upon foreign countries that are endeavouring to rival Great Britain in the sale

of her manufactures, and is contrary to the principle of national reciprocity upon which commercial intercourse between different nations ought to be grounded." Evidently foreign countries were not advancing in the direction of reciprocity.

Upon the subject of the laws against combinations of workmen, the meeting, whilst it admitted that these might require considerable modification, considered that the particular alterations it might be necessary to make could only be correctly ascertained by obtaining information from the manufacturing towns generally, and, therefore, was not prepared to come to any specific resolution on the subject.

The Directors of the Chamber were empowered to adopt such measures in pursuance of the above resolutions as they might deem expedient during the investigation then pending in the Select Committee of the House of Commons, and the Board of Directors subsequently appointed a deputation consisting of Messrs. Thomas Osler and William Brunton to give evidence before the Committee.

Free Trade.

It is interesting to record that the general meetings referred to above were apparently the first that had been called to consider specific subjects apart from the annual report, and that after the resolutions mentioned had been passed the following was moved and seconded :—

"That this meeting has been in degree induced to come to the above resolutions from the consideration that as the laws now stand with regard to the importation of the necessaries of life, and raw materials for manufacture, it would be in vain to attempt to entirely regulate our foreign commercial relations agreeably to the principles of free trade; should, however, the principle be admitted that it would be advisable (*sic*) to repeal the corn laws; to admit manufacturers to go to the cheapest market for the raw material, this meeting considers that an extensive alteration in our general commercial policy might then be made both with safety and advantage."

Upon a division this motion was negatived, there being :—ayes, 7; noes, 15.

Another subject considered in 1824 was the propriety of the Chamber petitioning his Majesty's Government for the recognition of such of the new Governments in North and South America as might appear to have established their independence, and subsequently a petition was presented to his Majesty in council with reference to those Governments which had declared themselves independent of the authority of Spain, and which, after arduous struggles, had succeeded in effecting their entire emancipation, and presented "the fair prospect of beneficial and widely-extended markets for the products of the manufacturing skill and industry of this nation." In the petition it was stated that the "extensiveness" and importance of the trade which had already been carried on with the new States, "notwithstanding the insecurity attending its operations, owing to the dubious character of the political relationship" subsisting between them and this country, afforded just grounds for believing that the commercial intercourse between them and this country would be "susceptible of considerable augmentation" if benefitted by that protection to which it would be entitled "under Governments unequivocally recognised as the friends and allies of the British nation."

Independent
American
States.

The greatly enhanced price of iron and other metals which occurred early in 1825, having been found to diminish the foreign demand for many of our staple manufactures, the attention of the Chamber was naturally directed to the injury inflicted by the continuance of the high duties upon all such imported metals as were extensively used in this district. It appeared, upon inquiry by the Chamber, that the merchants who were in the habit of supplying the markets of the United States, and various parts of Europe, with British hardware manufactures were resorting for similar articles to Germany from whence they secured them on more favourable terms, on account of the lower cost of the raw materials. Petitions were prepared and presented to both Houses of Parliament, expressing the apprehended increase of foreign competition from this cause, and praying for such a gradual reduction of duty upon the imported materials as would relieve the British manufacturer

Prices of
Metals.

without occasioning any "violent convulsion" either to capital or industry engaged in the production of metals in this country. Previously to the presentation of these petitions the suggestion of the Chamber was communicated to his Majesty's Ministers, and immediately received the favourable attention of the President of the Board of Trade, who soon afterwards recommended to the Legislature a mitigation of the duties to an extent "fully as great as the Directors of the Chamber could desire under existing circumstances." An Act was shortly afterwards passed by which the following reduction of duties was fixed:—

Upon Iron from	£6 10 0	per ton to	£1 10 0
„ Copper „	£54 0 0	„ „	£27 0 0
„ Tin „	£5 9 3	„ „	£2 10 0
„ Lead „	£20 0 0	„ „	£15 0 0
„ Zinc „	£28 0 0	„ „	£14 0 0

The reduced duty on zinc was subject to a further graduated reduction to £10.

**Government
Orders for
Arms.**

In the beginning of the year 1825 a representation was made to the Chamber by a delegation of manufacturers of arms to the effect that the orders of the Board of Ordnance had been almost entirely withdrawn from Birmingham, notwithstanding the engagements which had been entered into by the Board of Ordnance with delegates from Birmingham in the year 1816. The Chamber thereupon decided to memorialise the Board of Ordnance upon the matter, and at the outset of their memorial they reminded the Board that during the "late wars" in which this country had been engaged with France and other European Powers the principal supply of arms for the use of the British armies and also for the armies of "his Majesty's allies" was received from the manufacturers at Birmingham. The next reminder was that in 1816, when a representation was made by a delegation from Birmingham, that they viewed with considerable alarm the establishment of a Royal Manufactory of Arms at Enfield, the Board of Ordnance recognised the important services rendered to his Majesty's Government by the Town of Birmingham during the war, and engaged to confine the manufactory at Enfield to the repair only of

arms and to distribute among the contractors at Birmingham such proportion of their future orders as they had been accustomed to receive during the war, provided they should be equal in quality to those produced elsewhere. It appears from the petition, however, that the Ordnance Board had since extended the establishment at Enfield to the manufacture of new arms and also that large orders for arms had been distributed by the Board to the contractors in London to the entire exclusion of the Birmingham manufacturers. The Chamber, therefore, relying upon the recognition of the services rendered by the Birmingham manufacturers of arms during the war, and feeling confident that the Royal Manufactory at Enfield was incapable of competing in point of cheapness with private manufacturers and that the manufacturers at Birmingham possessed the means of supplying arms of as good quality and at as low a price as they could be obtained elsewhere prayed that the Board would "take the premises into consideration" and direct that the manufacture of new arms at Enfield should cease; and that a due proportion of Government orders should be allotted to Birmingham as formerly, so as to protect the Birmingham manufacturers in the continued enjoyment of that important branch of their trade so long as they may be enabled to retain the same with benefit to the Government upon the principle of free competition. In their annual report the Committee stated that as a result of their petition they "succeeded in obtaining a partial restoration of the orders of the Board of Ordnance."

Whilst the Directors of the Chamber in 1825 expressed their gratification "at the disposition manifested by the Government to bring still more extensively into practice those liberal principles "which had influenced their measures and which had always been advocated by the Chamber, they considered that the adoption of that policy, and particularly as it regarded the "recent great reduction of duties upon foreign manufactures" involved the necessity of extending their application to the more easy introduction of foreign corn "as the only effectual means of enabling this nation to maintain a successful competition with other countries which, in the

Importation
of Corn.

event of such relief being still withheld, must now enjoy an unfair advantage, even in the British market, on account of the greater cheapness of labour occasioned by the low price of food in other parts of the world." With this impression and the conviction that the introduction of foreign corn would afford to other countries the "ready means of making returns for the productions of British industry, the Directors petitioned both Houses of Parliament for such a modification of the corn laws as in their wisdom might seem sufficient for giving the desired relief, "consistently with a due regard to the other important interests involved in such a measure." In this petition the Directors alleged that the import duties on corn had the effect of depressing commerce by increasing wages, and the cost of production, and that the duties had operated injuriously not only by affording a pretext to foreign powers to persevere in the exclusion of British manufacturers by a system of high duties, but also by producing those sudden fluctuations in prices which were so distressing to consumers and detrimental to the growers of corn. They also stated that if Parliament deemed it expedient that the prohibitory duties on foreign manufactured articles should be reduced and gradually abolished—that workmen might combine to raise the price of labour—and that artisans might migrate and machinery be freely exported, a due regard to justice and to sound and consistent policy required that the manufacturers of the country should be allowed to purchase their food and raw materials at the best and cheapest markets.

CHAPTER XIX.

1826.

Financial
Stress.

In the early part of 1826 the attention of the Committee of the Chamber was "painfully drawn" to the serious embarrassments by which many respectable

persons in the town were affected in consequence of the financial pressure of the times depriving them of their usual pecuniary resources, whilst from the general stagnation of trade their stocks were rapidly accumulating. At the request of several members of the Chamber, the subject was taken into consideration, and the Committee endeavoured to obtain for their fellow townsmen a participation in "that species of temporary relief" which had been extended to other large towns. Some "respectable gentlemen, who were not likely to require any accommodation themselves" (to wit, Messrs. Charles Cope, William Blakeway, J. F. Ledsam, William Beale, J. T. Lawrence, Thomas Small, and Oliver Mason), were accordingly deputed to confer with the Governor and Directors of the Bank of England, and the result was the appointment by the Bank of Local Commissioners for granting the aid required. The application made was for the "appropriation of the sum of £400,000 for the relief of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham." In their annual report the Committee observed that it was probable that the "peculiar conditions attached to that kind of assistance"—which were found in many cases to be inapplicable to the trade of Birmingham—might have prevented it from being so "extensively useful as could have been wished," but they expressed the hope that it had been the means of affording actual relief in some cases and believed that it had been instrumental in restoring confidence in many others.

From the report of the deputation it appears that the Bank of England were not disposed to appropriate £400,000. They suggested £200,000, but the deputation stated that this would not meet the necessities of the district. Then £250,000 was named, but still the deputation pressed for a larger amount. Finally £300,000 was granted, subject to certain carefully-drawn regulations. One of the regulations limited the amount to be lent upon any single application to sums of not less than £500 nor more than £10,000. The deputation enquired whether, as many of the manufactures in the district were conducted on a small scale there would be any objection, in that instance, to smaller sums (say £300) being lent. To this it was

“distinctly replied that there would be a great objection on the part of the Bank, the grant being intended to aid manufacturers and not small shop-keepers, and it was further impressed upon the deputation that the loan was not granted with any view of raising prices.” It being then remarked that the time for which loans were to be granted extended only to four months, the deputation urged that an increased period should be allowed owing to the fact that the custom of giving long credit had for a considerable time prevailed in the town; but the Governor of the Bank replied “that this system of long credit ought not to receive any encouragement from them,” although “the Bank would not be found illiberal” in exceptional cases. The Governor asked as to the “nature of the goods likely to be deposited” (as security for the loans), and the deputation replied that the goods made in this district would not readily admit of being deposited, and that “in far the greater number of cases personal security would be offered.” The Governor then observed that it would remain for the Chamber of Commerce to make the local arrangements, and that as soon as these were completed and communicated to the Bank, no time on their part would be lost in carrying the object into effect.

The regulations upon which the loan of £300,000 was granted are of considerable interest, but the exigencies of space render it essential that only a summary of them should be given. Advances were to be made in sums of from £500 to £10,000 on “adequate security.” In exceptional cases, and with the approval of the Governor and Directors of the Bank, the maximum of £10,000 might be exceeded. Advances were to be made on the deposit of yarns, manufactured goods, raw produce, non-perishable merchandise, or personal security. The amount of advance was not to exceed “one-half to two-thirds of the deposit estimated at the existing reduced prices and according to the nature of the goods.” Goods deposited were to be placed in approved warehouses, and, where practicable, to be “under the King’s lock;” and were also to be fully insured at the expense of the borrower against loss by fire. Advances were to be repayable with interest at the rate of 5 per cent. per annum at a period

not exceeding four calendar months, subject to the granting of renewed accommodation to an extent not exceeding two-thirds of the original loan. Where an advance was made on personal security three separate notes of hand were to be given to the full amount of the loan, "one of such notes to be given by the borrower and one by each of two sufficient sureties by way of collateral security." The Chamber of Commerce were to establish a local Board of Commissioners to administer the loan—their expenses to be charged to borrowers—and to keep accurate minutes of their proceedings, which were to be open to the inspection of any agent of the Bank of England.

The following members of the Chamber were appointed to act as Commissioners to superintend the distribution of the Bank loan—all of them being "such gentlemen as are at present unconnected with business," viz. :—the Rev. John Corrie, and Messrs. W. C. Russell, Thomas Lee, Theodore Price, and Benjamin Guest. Owing to a domestic bereavement Mr. Price subsequently resigned, and Mr. James Belles, "lately a merchant of eminence in this place," was appointed in his stead.

A Special General Meeting of the members of the Corn Laws. Chamber was held on the 13th November, 1826, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning the Legislature for a revision of the laws for regulating the importation of foreign corn—a subject which had previously occupied the attention of the Chamber. At this meeting the following resolutions were adopted :—

- (1) "That after the adoption and application of those free principles of trade, which have been so ably advocated by his Majesty's Ministers and sanctioned by both Houses of Parliament, it becomes an act of legislative justice towards the commercial part of the community so to modify the laws for regulating the importation of corn as to accord with those principles."
- (2) "That the present system of corn laws—by increasing the wages of labour—by precluding other nations from making suitable return for an extended demand for our manufactures—

affording a pretext for their exclusion by high duties—and by causing sudden fluctuations in the price of subsistence—tends to depress the manufacturing and commercial interests of this country, and to subject the growers and consumers of corn to the most distressing vicissitudes.”

- (3) “That this meeting believes that the modification of the corn laws requisite for accommodating them to the late salutary alterations in the manufacturing and commercial policy of the country, must eventually promote the welfare of the agriculturists themselves, by its tendency to prevent great and sudden variations in price at home and in foreign states, retaliatory laws, and hostile feeling towards this nation, which, in their effects, cannot fail to depress its manufactures and commerce, upon whose prosperity the agriculturists greatly depend for the consumption of the various productions of the soil.”
- (4) “That this meeting in urging the importance of such increased freedom in the foreign corn trade as shall be commensurate with the reduction of protecting duties upon imported manufactures, nevertheless unequivocally recognises the necessity of such degree of protection, both for the British agriculturist and the manufacturer, as shall cover so much of the cost of production as is referable to the burthens sustained for discharging the public engagements of the country.”

Petitions founded upon these resolutions were subsequently prepared and forwarded to Lord Viscount Dudley and Ward and Lord Calthorpe for presentation to the House of Lords, and to Dugdale Stratford Dugdale, Esq., and Francis Lawley, Esq., the representatives for the County of Warwick, for presentation to the House of Commons. The resolutions were also printed and advertised.

CHAPTER XX.

1827—8.

A Special Meeting of the Committee was held on the 25th January, 1827, to take into consideration the question of the exportation of machinery. At this meeting the view was expressed that the advantages which the country had enjoyed in maintaining a successful competition with the manufacturers of other countries was mainly referable to the excellence of its machinery ; and that, consequently, an unlimited permission to export machinery would enable foreigners to imitate the improvements and inventions of its manufacturers, deprive the latter of the just reward of their ingenuity, and eventually exclude the produce of their industry and skill from many of the markets they then possessed. In a succeeding resolution the Committee stated that, when the combined effect of heavy taxation and of a high price of subsistence in enhancing the cost of production was considered, it would be obvious that our manufacturers could not long maintain their competition with foreigners if, in addition to these disadvantages, they were deprived of that protection for their inventions and discoveries to which they were indebted for the advantages they had hitherto enjoyed. Then came the following interesting resolution :—

Exportation
of
Machinery.

“ That whilst this Chamber is not disposed to question the correctness of those principles of free trade which have been adopted, it contends that these principles cannot under existing circumstances be justly applied to the machinery of the country (by which the effects of heavy taxation and a high price of subsistence are chiefly counteracted) but that especial care should be taken not to afford other nations, not subject to similar disadvantages, any facilities by which the processes for abridging and perfecting its manufacturing operations could be transferred from this kingdom.”

A copy of these resolutions was ordered to be transmitted to the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, with the intimation that it was the intention of the Chamber to present a petition founded upon them, in case any Bill should be brought into Parliament to allow of the exportation of machinery.

At a meeting held on March 1st, 1827, it was reported that a communication had been received from the Manchester Chamber acknowledging receipt of the resolutions above referred to, and urging the expediency of a memorial being forwarded to Government, and a Sub-Committee was appointed to prepare a memorial praying that a Bill might be brought into Parliament for amending the then existing law by prohibiting generally the exportation of machinery and allowing licences only to be granted in cases where the parties applying for permission to export proved to the satisfaction of the Board of Trade that the articles intended to be sent were not such as were likely to affect the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country.

Trade with
East and
West Indies.

At the same meeting another memorial was approved in which it was recited that the trade of "this town and neighbourhood, together with other manufacturing districts," was in a very depressed state, and that it was in the knowledge of the Chamber that articles manufactured in Birmingham and district which a short time previously were exported to a considerable extent, were then, in consequence of the competition of foreign nations, either altogether excluded from many of their accustomed markets or sent only in very limited quantities. Continuing, the Chamber expressed the opinion that the pressure of this competition and the increasing difficulty with which it was sustained gave the manufacturing interest a strong claim to all the legislative encouragement that could be afforded consistently with "those principles of free trade" which then regulated the commercial policy of the country. Observing, however, that these principles had been extended even to foreign nations manifesting no disposition to admit British manufactures in return for our importations of their productions at a reduced duty, the Chamber expressed their disappointment

that no measures had been taken for affording similar facilities to an increased intercourse with our Colonies in the East Indies. It was also pointed out that the duty on most of the imports from our Eastern Colonies considerably exceeded that on like imports from the West Indies, although the great population of the former "must render them more important as markets for our manufactures," and the view was expressed that "considerations of justice and of consistent policy" suggested "the propriety of equalising the duties upon the same productions from both the East and West India Colonies." In May, 1828, another memorial was presented in favour of the equalisation of the duties referred to.

At a meeting held on the 28th January, 1828, a memorial to the Lord Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury in favour of a repeal of the Stamp Duties on receipts was approved. The opening paragraph of the memorial was as follows :—

"That the established confidence in the integrity and respectability of the great body of tradesmen in this country, occasions an unwillingness in their connections to subject them to the unavailing expense of giving receipt stamps."

It was then observed that as the principal reliance of the Government for the enforcement of the duty must rest upon the "assumed distrust of payers of money in the honour and integrity of those receiving it," it was improbable that its exaction could become general. In the next clause the Chamber stated that the comparatively small number of cases in which the duty was ever likely to be paid—however strong the measures resorted to for its enforcement—rendered it unequal and consequently very obnoxious, and following upon this there came the statement that there were numerous cases of daily occurrence in which the profits of a transaction bore a very small proportion to the amount of money paid, and that, consequently, if it were possible to compel payment of the duty in such cases, it would become intolerably oppressive and unjust. Finally the Chamber urged :—

"That as experience has proved this duty to be odious, embarrassing, easy of evasion, and consequently

Stamp Duty
on Receipts.

unproductive, it appears to this meeting that any benefit it may confer upon the Government by its contribution to the revenue must be considered as counterbalanced by its unpopularity and the demoralising habit which it induces among the people of disregarding the laws of the country."

The Lords of the Treasury replied that the prayer of the memorial could not be granted, but the Chamber evidently was not daunted by this rebuff. A letter was received from the President of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce urging the prosecution of further measures for effecting the repeal of the tax, and a petition was therefore presented to the House of Commons, urging total repeal, or, if the state of the revenue would not allow of a total repeal, then such a modification as might exempt the payment of sums under £20 from its operation.

CHAPTER XXI.

1829.

Trade with
India and
China.

At a meeting of the Committee held on April 3rd, 1829, a letter was received from Mr. W. Whitmore, M.P., and from the Mayor of Liverpool, the latter transmitting a copy of certain resolutions which had been adopted at a meeting held in Liverpool. It was thereupon decided to convene a General Meeting of Members of the Chamber, and to submit the following resolutions for consideration :

- (1) "That the political strength of the British Empire mainly depends on the prosperity of its manufactures and commerce."
- (2) "That the high and prohibitory duties imposed by foreign States on the manufactured produce of this kingdom, and the very successful encouragement given by their respective Governments to their own manufactures and commerce, render it indispensable that the

Legislature should avail itself of every opportunity by which the trade of this country can be improved and extended to countries over which its influence can operate."

- (3) "That all experience since 1813 has demonstrated that neither the power to purchase nor a disposition to use commodities of European manufacture are wanting in the natives of British India, and that there is reason to believe that a more free and direct intercourse with China would prove the existence of a similar disposition in that country."
- (4) "That as the charter of the East India Company will expire in 1834, on three years' previous notice being given by Parliament, it appears to this Board expedient that this Chamber should petition both Houses of Parliament to take into their consideration during the present session the restrictions which impede the commerce of this country with China for the purpose of facilitating and extending a more beneficial intercourse with those vast regions than now exists."
- (5) "That it is unjust and impolitic to exclude or restrain British merchants from that trade with our own Colonies, in which the subjects of foreign nations are freely allowed to participate."
- (6) "That this Chamber relies on the wisdom of Parliament and on its just estimate of the numbers, wealth, and intelligence of the manufacturing and commercial part of the community for the eventual removal of every existing obstruction to our intercourse with British India, China, Southern Asia, and the Eastern Islands."

At the subsequent General Meeting petitions, founded on these resolutions, were adopted, and ordered to be forwarded to D. S. Dugdale and T. Lawley, Esquires, the Members for the County, for presentation to the House of Commons, and to Lord Calthorpe for presentation to the House of Lords; and the resolutions were ordered to be

advertised in the Birmingham papers and in the "Times" and "Globe" (London papers), and sent to the principal manufacturing and commercial towns, and to the Members of the Chamber.

Shortly afterwards letters were received from the East India Association at Liverpool urging the appointment of a deputation from Birmingham to meet delegates from Liverpool, Bristol, Manchester, and Glasgow, and on May 5th, 1829, the Chairman and the Low Bailiff were requested "to favour the meeting by proceeding to London at their earliest convenience," and to avail themselves of the assistance of any member who might be in town and be disposed to render them aid. It was also decided that as it was desirable "that the proceedings in this country relative to the opening of the trade to India and China should be made known in India, where a very lively interest in the question has been discovered," the resolutions previously recited should be advertised in the "Oriental Herald," which, it was understood, had a very extensive circulation in our Eastern Empire.

The deputation proceeded almost immediately to London, and subsequently reported that "they had daily communication" with the delegates from other towns. At these conferences it was agreed that application should be made to the Government to support the intended motion of Mr. Whitmore in the House of Commons for a Committee of Inquiry into the trade between Great Britain and the East Indies and China. A deputation of "nearly twenty persons" then waited upon the Duke of Wellington, who received them "favourably" and with "most marked attention." With his Grace were the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Control, and the President of the Board of Trade. The Duke of Wellington assured the deputation that their representations would receive the most attentive consideration of the Government, but stated that he was not prepared to make any declaration as to the measures they would deem proper to take, or even of their intentions in regard to the motion of which Mr. Whitmore had given notice. In their report, however, the Birmingham delegates stated that the deputation retired with the

impression that their case had generally been fairly stated and with the conviction that it had received the "most implicit and satisfactory attention of the Ministers present during an audience of nearly an hour's duration."

In commenting upon the success of the deputation, the delegates said that "the luminous and convincing exposition of Mr. Whitmore commanded the profoundest attention of a numerous House, on whom his statement of facts made a very lively impression; that the pledge given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and more than once repeated by the Rt. Hon. the President of the Board of Trade, to institute at the commencement of the next session an inquiry at once minute and comprehensive into every circumstance connected with our existing relations with India, and to move, without delay, for the production of all the documentary evidence by which these relations may be intermediately illustrated, was of a kind the most satisfactory and unequivocal, and that your deputation think it reasonable to infer that the general current of opinion in the House of Commons is decidedly in unison with that of the manufacturing and commercial interests." Shortly afterwards the Chamber obtained, at a cost of £25, about 500 copies of a pamphlet entitled: "Free Trade and Colonization of India," to which they gave the greatest possible publicity.

At the General Meeting referred to a resolution was passed recommending the Committee to consider the best means of increasing the number of subscribers to the Chamber, and also the expediency of making the subscription an annual one. The need for the latter proposal would seem to have become an urgent one, as the total amount of subscriptions collected between October 14th, 1826, and December 31st, 1827, was only £7 7s. 0d. In 1829, however, they realised the sum of £102 18s. 0d.

Membership
of the
Chamber.

CHAPTER XXII.

1830.

Battle of
Copenhagen,
1807.
Confiscation
of Property.

Early in 1830 a Special Meeting of the Committee was held to consider the expediency of an application being made to Parliament on the subject of the claims of British merchants for remuneration on account of property confiscated by the Danish Government in 1807, or nearly a quarter-of-a-century before. The Committee decided that "the sufferers by the confiscation referred to" had "a strong claim on the justice of the British Government," and that it was desirable to bring the subject before the House of Commons by petition. In the opening paragraph of the petition it was recited that losses to a considerable amount were sustained by British merchants resident in Birmingham from the confiscation of their property and book debts by the Danish Government in the year 1807, consequent upon the attack on Copenhagen by the fleet of his Britannic Majesty, under the command of Admiral Lord Gambier. It was then stated that a provision was made by the 9th Article of the Treaty of Capitulation that any English property that might have been sequestrated in consequence of the hostilities should be returned to the owners. From the next clause of the petition, however, it would appear that the sequestration and confiscation of British property and book debts owing to British merchants in Denmark and Norway were "consequent to the detention and confiscation of all Danish property in the British Dominions" amounting "to £1,200,000 and claimed as 'Droits of the Admiralty.'" This being so, the Chamber contended that the sufferers had reason to look for indemnity for their losses out of that fund, as a considerable portion of the property confiscated by his Majesty's Government (but for a misunderstanding between the two Governments) would have been applied in liquidation of the claim of British merchants upon the subjects of Denmark. The sufferers had experienced a further disappointment of the "Expectation

of Indemnity " held out to them by his Majesty's Government in finding that the Treaty of Kiel, ratified on the 31st January, 1814, contained a stipulation for the release of such property only as had not been already confiscated, and thereby virtually sanctioned "the unjust act of spoliation." The owners of the confiscated British property were not only precluded by the "peculiar secrecy" with which the attack upon Copenhagen was planned, from providing the usual precautionary measures for its protection, but by the appointment of convoy and grants of the Admiralty licences were encouraged by the British Government to trade to Denmark during the secret preparation of the armament to attack its capital. In view of this the Chamber alleged that the property in question might, therefore, have been fairly considered to have been exposed by his Majesty's Government to the risk of seizure for the sake of more effectually securing the accomplishment of an "object of State deemed of paramount importance." It was also alleged that the subsequent abandonment of protection to the sufferers by the Treaty of Kiel might equally be considered as the deliberate sacrifice of the just claims of private persons for State considerations. The concluding clause of the petition was to the effect that the Chamber bore in grateful remembrance that out of the "Droits of the Admiralty" arising from the detention of the Spanish frigates before Cadiz in the year 1804, the claims of British subjects against His Catholic Majesty for their book debts confiscated in Spain were fully paid and satisfied by the administration of the Rt. Hon. William Pitt, and that they could not help but consider this as a "precedent for the admission of the present claims on his Majesty's Government, founded, as they are, on the strong basis of moral right."

On the 11th February, 1830, a General Meeting of the Chamber "and other respectable inhabitants of the Town and Neighbourhood of Birmingham" (in another place referred to as influential merchants and manufacturers not then connected with the Chamber) was held at the Public Office to take into consideration the expediency of petitioning Parliament on the subject of the renewal

East India
Company's
Charter.

of the Charter of the East India Company. In the first resolution passed it was stated that, although the meeting had derived much satisfaction from the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into the then existing relations with India, yet it was deemed expedient "again to assure the Legislature of the continued and deep sense" which was entertained by the manufacturing and commercial interests of the importance of the question, and to "petition against the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company on that principle of monopoly which forms its present basis." In the next resolution reference was again made to the "prohibitory commercial policy now so generally and steadily pursued by foreign nations," and the meeting expressed the view that this "and the existing state of trade and manufactures of Great Britain" equally demonstrated the necessity of adopting such legislative measures as would best promote their security and extension. The most effectual mode of doing this was, in the opinion of the meeting, for Parliament to "throw open to the industry, ingenuity, and enterprise of British subjects the vast and populous regions of India, and to facilitate as far as it was possible our intercourse with the Chinese Empire." Conviction was also expressed by the meeting that if the natives of this country were allowed to settle in India and to employ their skill and capital in cultivating the various products for which the soil was adapted, it would not only promote the rapid advancement of our Eastern Dependencies in wealth and intelligence, but eventually render them "the most important auxiliaries to our commercial prosperity which this country has ever possessed." An influential committee was appointed to prepare and arrange for the presentation of petitions founded upon the resolutions, and to adopt such other measures as they might deem expedient for carrying the objects of the meeting into effect. In their annual report the Directors of the Chamber expressed their great satisfaction at the active and efficient labours of the Committee, under the able auspices of the High Bailiff (Mr. William Chance), and also their "gratification of believing that the evidence that has hitherto been elicited by the pending Parliamentary investigation into

that branch of commerce, has tended powerfully to confirm the opinion that private trade to those parts of the world is susceptible of eventual and indefinite augmentation."

The Directors of the Chamber, in their annual report, stated that they had presented a petition against a Bill introduced into the House of Commons by the Attorney General for limiting the power of arrest on civil process to debts of £100 and upwards, it being considered that this limitation would prove very injurious to a numerous class of traders in the town. It was also reported that, in consequence of the representation so generally made by the trading interests, the Bill was withdrawn.

Mr. Samuel Tertius Galton had been chairman of the Chamber since it was formally established, with the exception of the years 1826 and 1827, when Mr. William Phipson appeared to occupy the chair. There is no entry in the minutes of Mr. Phipson's appointment, but as Mr. Galton was generally present at the meetings over which the former presided, there must have been some formal appointment not officially recorded. On the 30th November it is recorded that "Mr. Galton, having repeated his determination to resign the situation of Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, and having proposed for his successor Mr. Timothy Smith," the resignation of the former was accepted with regret, and the Directors expressed to him their high sense of his long and valuable services. Mr. Timothy Smith was subsequently elected Chairman and Mr. Oliver Mann, Vice-Chairman.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1831.

The Chamber was nothing if not persistent in regard to the subject of trade with India and China. A Special General Meeting was held on the 3rd February, 1831,

Trade with
India and
China.

to consider the propriety of again petitioning Parliament on the subject, and a series of resolutions was again adopted. In the first resolution it was stated that considering the "present state of this country, with its numerous and increasing population—its vast mechanical improvements, by which the powers of production are so prodigiously augmented—and the great accumulation of its capital," it was incumbent on the Government to adopt all practicable means of opening new channels of commerce for its merchants and manufacturers. As the policy of foreign states was opposed generally to those principles of trade and free competition which were founded on the basis of mutual benefit, the Chamber contended that it obviously became the "duty of the legislature to avail itself of every Colonial resource for the extension of the commerce and the encouragement of the manufactures of these kingdoms." It was then stated that the evidence adduced before the Parliamentary Committee for investigating the affairs of India during the previous session demonstrated what had been confirmed by experience, viz. : that the Chinese, in common with the natives of India and other Asiatic dominions desired to cultivate a free commercial intercourse with other countries, and had a strong disposition to purchase and consume articles of European manufacture. An unrestricted communication with the interior of Hindustan by the subjects of these realms would, it was believed, lead to the amelioration of that important portion of the British Empire, and indefinitely promote an increase of the trade of Great Britain; whilst the monopoly so long enjoyed by the East India Company with the greater part of their territorial possessions and exclusively with China was "inconsistent with all sound commercial principles and incompatible with the national interests." Furthermore, "to permit all other nations to participate in a beneficial trade from which the merchants and manufacturers of this country were excluded" was "as unjust," as it was "impolitic." Petitions founded on these resolutions were ordered to be presented to both Houses of Parliament, and the High Bailiff, the Low Bailiff, and Mr. P. M. James, "or any two of them," were requested "to favour the

meeting by proceeding to London to co-operate with the Liverpool deputation in the appointed interview with Lord Grey on the 5th inst." (February, 1831).

After the 3rd February, 1831, no other meeting of the Committee of the Chamber appears to have been held until the 5th October, when the Deputy Chairman and High Bailiff (Mr. Oliver Mason) represented that the trade of the merchants and manufacturers to Naples and Palermo suffered much injury from certain Quarantine Regulations then recently established by the King of the two Sicilies. A memorial on the subject was presented to the Board of Trade, calling attention to the great inconvenience and loss to British shipping and British goods, and stating that the Quarantine Regulations enforced a Quarantine for a period of forty days, and directed that all merchandise and manufactured goods should be landed and deposited in the Quarantine Store Houses for the same period. The memorial proceeded :—

"These warehouses being situated close to the sea coast are consequently exposed to the sea atmosphere, and the articles manufactured in this town and neighbourhood are thereby materially injured, and frequently are rendered altogether unsaleable."

It was then stated that, owing to this circumstance, the merchants of Birmingham trading to Naples and Palermo had been obliged to suspend the execution of orders, whilst the manufacturers were suffering in consequence from the want of employment in that important branch of trade. The Chamber added that they were credibly informed that the representations of the French Diplomatic Agents had liberated French commerce from the severity of the regulations, and had obtained a reduction of Quarantine to ten days for French vessels, and they, therefore, prayed the Board of Trade to intervene in order to relieve the merchants and manufacturers of Birmingham from the great injury to which they were subjected.

Quarantine
Regulations
—Naples
and Palermo

CHAPTER XXIV.

1832—1840.

The
Chamber
ceases its
activity.

So far as the official records go, it would seem that the proceedings of the Chamber ceased abruptly after the meeting last referred to in the previous chapter. There is no account of any disagreement, nor of any difficulty in carrying on the work, and in view of the earnestness and vigour with which the Directors had performed their functions, and the important subjects with which they were dealing, it is inconceivable that the organisation was deliberately broken up and the membership disbanded. It must not be forgotten that the Directors of the Chamber were men occupying high positions in the town, men of public spirit who were found to be active in all matters philanthropic, religious, educational, and social affecting the welfare of the community. They were certainly not men who would lightly divest themselves of the burden they had voluntarily assumed, the burden, that is to say, of watching over and protecting the interests of the mercantile and manufacturing classes. Notwithstanding all this, however, it is indisputable that the Chamber passed into a dormant condition, and ultimately ceased its activity for a time. It is possible that the bitter political strife created by the reform agitation had an adverse influence on the smooth working of a non-political body. In January, 1830, a requisition, drawn up and signed by over 200 inhabitants, was presented to Mr. William Chance, the High Bailiff (who was also a prominent Director of the Chamber), stating that "the general distress which now afflicts the country, and which has been so severely felt at several periods during the last fifteen years, is entirely to be ascribed to the gross mismanagement of public affairs, and that such mismanagement can only be effectually and permanently remedied by an effectual reform of the Commons House of Parliament." The signatories further stated that for the legal accomplishment of this great object, and for the further

Political
Strife.

redress of public wrongs and grievances it was expedient to form a General Political Union between the lower and middle classes of the people, and the High Bailiff was therefore requested to call a meeting of merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, mechanics, artisans, and others for the purpose of considering the matter and adopting such further measures as might be deemed expedient. Among those who signed the requisition were Thomas Attwood, Joshua Scholefield, G. F. Muntz, John Betts, Thomas Shorthouse, Samuel Badger, Jun., Thomas Chambers, and Thomas Hughes.

A Public Meeting urged.

The High Bailiff firmly but courteously refused to convene the desired meeting, as one of the objects contemplated was the formation of a General Political Union; and the requisitionists therefore decided to convene the meeting themselves, and in response to their advertisement some 15,000 persons assembled in Beardsworth's Repository on the 25th January, 1830, under the chairmanship of Mr. G. F. Muntz, when the General Political Union was successfully formed.

The High Bailiff's Refusal.

In October, 1830, the Political Union had a dinner, which was attended by upwards of three thousand six hundred persons to celebrate the French Revolution. The proceedings at the dinner must have been accompanied by many outbursts of enthusiasm, for after returning thanks for the toast of his health, Mr. Attwood, in giving the last toast, "strongly urged all present to retire to their respective homes."

The French Revolution.

In the same month the Union petitioned the King to dismiss the Ministry, and, says Langford, "In a few weeks after, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel resigned, and the Grey administration was formed." On December 13th, 1830, another meeting was held "in support of the new Cabinet," and certain political propositions were laid down as the "birthright of every Englishman."

Resignation of the Ministry.

The political excitement continued to increase, and the year 1831 opened with a visit from "Orator Hunt," the Radical member for Preston, who was escorted into the town by "a motley procession, under the superintendence of Messrs. Russell and Edmunds and other less

Increased Political Excitement

distinguished members of the Union." At the anniversary dinner of the Union Mr. Attwood (the president) reported that they had about 9,000 members paying from four shillings to two guineas per annum, and that the Union "had condensed the moral power of this great population and gathered it, as it were, into an electrical mass." The members of the Union, however, were not the only persons who were desirous of securing Parliamentary Reform, for, in February, 1831, a petition "in favour of an amended representation of the people in Parliament" was adopted, signed, and presented to Parliament by and on behalf of "those of the inhabitants who did not generally co-operate with the Union." It was entitled: "The Petition of the Magistrates, Clergy, High and Low Bailiff, Bankers, Merchants, Manufacturers, and other Inhabitants," and was a thoroughly statesmanlike document, containing no words or phrases calculated to arouse the partisan feelings of the community.

The Reform
Bill.

Whilst a meeting of the "Grammar School Reformers" was being held in March, 1831, the news of the Reform Bill having passed its second reading by a majority of 22, was received with "long and continued cheering." So exuberant was the feeling of those who remained that at the close of the meeting Mr. T. W. Hill, of Edgbaston, was called to the chair, and it was resolved that the event should be celebrated by a general illumination on the next evening. This resolution was publicly notified by means of wall placards, and some inhabitants at once commenced making preparations. Others, however, objected to the proceedings, and applied to the public authorities, who authorised the constable to issue a notice "affording assurance of protection to those who declined compliance with the resolve of the meeting." The lighting-up was, in consequence, only partial, and a request to the Wardens of St. Martin's and St. Philip's to allow the bells to be rung on the occasion was declined, "and the bells of both churches remained silent."

Reform Bill
Excitement.

On the subsequent defeat of the Reform Bill and the resignation of the Ministry (which latter the King declined to accept), Parliament was prorogued on April 22nd, 1831,

and dissolved on the following day, and there was a greater state of excitement in Birmingham than had been observed for some years, and considerable public disorder ensued. The new Parliament assembled on June 14th, 1831, and on August 19th the Commons passed the Reform Bill by 345 votes to 236. The second reading of the Bill in the Lords was fixed for October 3rd, and just before the division was taken a great public meeting, attended, it was said by a contemporary writer, by 150,000 (obviously an inflated figure) was held, at which, among other resolutions, one was passed expressing a determination not to pay taxes if the Bill was rejected. In the words of Langford, "The infatuated Lords, however, rejected the Bill" on second reading by a vote of 199 against 158, and "the Birmingham Union threatened to march up to London." Public meetings were held, and many violent speeches were delivered thereat. The Political Union proposed for the purpose of meeting the exigencies of the time to form affiliated unions throughout the country, but this was declared to be illegal, and on November 21st a proclamation to that effect was published and the design accordingly abandoned. Langford adds, "But the scheme was carried on quite as effectively without the name of affiliated societies as with it." He continues, "As the busy year of 1831 closed the organisation of the various unions was progressing, and the people were preparing themselves to win the glorious victory of 1832."

It is no part of the function of this work to deal with political history, but the preceding paragraphs are offered as shewing how tense were the feelings of politicians in 1831, and as affording a possible reason for the inability of the Chamber to continue its activities. From such records as are available, however, it is clear that the need for combined action in the interests of merchants and manufactures was soon felt, for on the 29th March, 1833, an important meeting of these classes was held to advocate the giving of statutory security for "the property of inventions to their authors at a moderate expense," and to resolve that the Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Godson "to explain and amend the laws respecting Letters Patent for Inventions" was defective

The
Chamber of
Commerce.

Patent Laws

in most of its provisions, and, if passed into law, would fail to secure to inventors that protection and facility which it was the object of the Patent Laws to do. At this meeting a Committee, consisting of Mr. B. Cook, Dr. Church, Mr. Van Wart, Mr. Edward Lucas, Mr. Horne, Mr. Goddard, Mr. C. H. Capper, Mr. W. Richards, Mr. F. Muntz, and Mr. R. Rotton, was appointed to superintend the progress of the Bill through Parliament and to raise funds for defraying the necessary expenses.

Commercial
Distress.

In 1837 there was much commercial distress, and a meeting of masters and workmen was held under the chairmanship of the Low Bailiff (James James, Esq.), to consider the position when a series of resolutions was passed on the motion of Mr. Richard Spooner, attributing the distress mainly to the monetary system. Had the Chamber of Commerce been then in a state of activity it is probable that some suggestion for remedying the evil would have been made, but the meeting referred to expressed its unwillingness to propose a remedy, although it did not hesitate to say that a remedy might and ought "immediately to be applied," and that it was the imperative duty of the legislature, without delay, to take measures for the immediate and effectual relief "of the present increasing and alarming distress before it assumes a shape which will make all remedies impossible."

The need for
a Chamber of
Commerce.

From the interesting pages of Langford's "Century of Birmingham Life," it may reasonably be inferred that the absence of a Chamber of Commerce between 1832 and 1840 produced a distinct gap in the economic organisation of the city. Subjects of special importance to the commercial community were continually cropping up, and meetings of one kind or another were held to consider them. As may be imagined, the work was not done so well or so effectively as if there had been a properly organised body like the Chamber of Commerce to deal with and pronounce a sober and considered judgment upon them. As will be seen from the next chapter, however, the need was very shortly met by the re-establishment of the Chamber.

CHAPTER XXV.

1841—1854.

The year 1841 was marked by considerable depression in trade, which was attributed by a number of people to the currency laws. A meeting of the burgesses of St. George's Ward was convened, at which Mr. Matthias Green occupied the chair, and Mr. T. C. Salt detailed his views of the depression which he attributed chiefly to the Government, "who had made food scarce and money dear, and taxes (general and local) extremely heavy." Mr. Salt added that the monetary system had undergone many great changes in England, but that the greatest of all and the most iniquitous change had been effected by Peel's Bill. After these observations, a resolution was passed to the effect that an Association should be formed to obtain "a unity of opinion" on the main causes of general distress and on the most effective means of removing them; and Mr. Thomas Attwood was requested to act as treasurer. A few days later a second meeting was held at the Police Court, and long before the hour appointed the Court was occupied by a body of operatives. On Mr. Salt entering, he requested them to leave the room, "the meeting being limited to burgesses." An operative addressed Mr. Salt in reply, and stated that he had understood that the object of the meeting was to consider the causes of the distress of the community, and that, therefore, "all persons, without distinction, were invited to be present." The parties in the Court, not appearing disposed to comply with Mr. Salt's request, that gentleman, "with the burgesses in attendance," withdrew to another apartment, and several resolutions (particulars of which are not recorded) were passed.

On the 20th December, 1841, a well-attended meeting of ratepayers was held, under the presidency of Mr. Richard Spooner, to consider the causes of the great increase in the local rates. It appeared that in the year ending June, 1839, the cost of supporting the poor was

£25,000. In 1841 the cost was something less. In 1839 the sum of £63,000 was collected, and in the year 1841 £108,000, shewing an increased expenditure of £45,000, although the expense of the poor was diminished rather than otherwise. There was evidently a need for a reform of local poor law administration.

Chamber of
Commerce
re-
established.

The absence of an active organisation of a permanent character had, no doubt, been felt for some time. Matters of vital importance to the mercantile and manufacturing community had evidently been continually cropping up, and had involved much work and considerable expense on the part of a few far-seeing individuals. On the 8th February, 1842, a meeting of merchants and manufacturers was held, with Mr. E. T. Moore in the chair, at which it was resolved :—

“That in the opinion of this meeting it is expedient and would be beneficial to the commercial and manufacturing interests of the town, to re-establish the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures in Birmingham.”

From the express words just quoted it is clear that the meeting recognised that the Chamber had, in the past, done work beneficial to the interests referred to in the resolution, and that the economic value of an organisation of a non-partisan character was fully realised then as it is to-day. It was decided that a subscription of not less than one guinea per annum should constitute membership, and the following gentlemen were appointed a Committee to draw up the rules and regulations :—

Edward Burke	P. H. Muntz
Francis Clarke	D. Malins, Jun.
Samuel Evans, Jun.	E. T. Moore
William Elliot	S. R. Phipson
S. A. Goddard	Thomas Pemberton
F. W. Harrold	Charles Shaw
Samuel Haines	William Soutter
James James	Henry Van Wart.

It is unfortunate that the official records of the Chamber of Commerce for this period do not exist, and that, as a result of this and the probable fact that the proceedings were not advertised in the public press as they

had been in the earlier years, there is very little information available as to the subjects discussed, or the action taken from time to time on matters of interest to the commercial community. In consequence of this almost entire lack of records it is also impossible to assess the measure of the activity of the Chamber during the years referred to at the head of this chapter. There can be no doubt, however, that the work of the Chamber was rendered exceedingly difficult by the prevalence of acute party controversy, and it is not improbable that its continuance and its efficiency were thereby considerably retarded.

At a meeting of the Chamber held on the 18th January, 1843, the Committee presented a report stating that

Alleged
Defective
State of the
Currency.

“Their attention has been drawn during the past year to various topics affecting more or less the mercantile and manufacturing interests of the town and neighbourhood ; but it has been more particularly directed to the state of the working classes, and to the great want of employment and consequent privations resulting therefrom. The prominent cause in the opinion of the Committee, which has been mainly influential in producing the depression under which the trade of the country has been suffering, is, as they conceive, to be found in the defective state of the currency ; and, in reference to this topic, they addressed a memorial to Sir R. Peel, embodying the opinions on this important subject, which resulted in a correspondence which the Committee lay before the Chamber.”

No other details of the work of 1842 are available, nor has it been possible to find any record of the arguments used in the correspondence with Peel on the subject of the currency. Langford, however, tells us that the memorial referred to was “a very lengthy document,” and was “mainly devoted to the exposition of the benefits which would result from a reform.” He naively adds :—“It is, perhaps, superfluous to add that it did not make a convert of Sir Robert Peel,” but he does not

give any reason for this statement, so that it is possible he was not uninfluenced by party feeling.

Economic
Distress.

On the 16th August, 1843, the bankers, merchants, and manufacturers held a large meeting at the Waterloo Rooms, to take into consideration "the existing distress of the town and neighbourhood." At this meeting it was proposed to present a memorial to Government, and in this document the distress was traced to the state of the currency. In their memorial the meeting also "arraigned the Bill of 1819 as the main source of the National calamities; a Bill the fraudulent effects of which are now universally acknowledged, and for which no defence is attempted, but the obstinate refusal of all inquiry." The memorialists demanded "immediate investigation," and stated "that the sufferings and dangers of the country require that no difficulty, or time, or inconvenience should be allowed to interfere with its immediate and active prosecution." An amendment to the memorial was proposed by Mr. G. Edmonds, and seconded by Mr. G. F. Muntz, M.P., "that the Mayor be requested to call a public meeting to memorialise her Majesty to dismiss her Ministers." The amendment was carried, and a deputation waited upon the Mayor, Mr. James James, with the requisition to him to convene the meeting. His Worship replied that he had given the subject his fullest consideration, and, "while he regretted to differ from many respectable inhabitants whose names were attached to the requisition, he must decline to call a meeting." There is nothing to show whether the meeting referred to was convened by or under the auspices of the Chamber, but it is significant that the Mayor was a member of the Committee appointed on the 8th February, 1842, to draw up rules and regulations for the re-establishment of the Chamber, and that the nature of his reply to the requisition disclosed a divergence of political opinion.

Political
Strife and
Industrial
Distress.

From Langford's "Modern Birmingham and its Institutions" it would seem that during this period political feeling was running very high, and this, no doubt, had an adverse effect on the work of the Chamber, which it probably paralysed. On the 26th January, 1842, a most important meeting of delegates was held at the

Waterloo Rooms, under the presidency of Mr. W. Scholefield, to consider the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws. At this meeting—which was undoubtedly of a party political character—reports were presented on the state of the various trades throughout the country, but more especially on those of Birmingham and the district. Mr. W. Boulton laid before the meeting statistical accounts of the distress which prevailed in the town. In the fancy steel toy trade he reported that the wages were reduced by one-half; in the plating trade by 30 to 40 per cent.; and in the brassfoundry trade from one-half to two-thirds. He also presented similar reports from lamp makers, gunmakers, silver workers, sawyers, wood turners, tinplate workers, screw makers, hinge makers, and others; whilst the pawnbrokers reported that they would not be able much longer to lend money on pledges, as the business had increased so rapidly and so few pledges were being redeemed. Reports from surrounding districts showed the existence of similar distress, and the meeting decided upon a deputation to Her Majesty's Ministers, and a petition to the House of Commons and also passed resolutions in favour of the total repeal of the Corn Laws and the abolition of all monopolies. On February 18th, 1842, a town's meeting on the subject of the Corn Laws was held under the presidency of the Mayor, Mr. Samuel Beale, in the Town Hall, which was densely crowded. A resolution moved by Alderman Weston, seconded by Alderman Van Wart, and supported by Mr. Thomas Attwood and Mr. Arthur O'Neill, which combined the repeal of the Corn Laws with the extension of the Suffrage was carried unanimously. What with Town's Meetings, meetings of the Political Union, of the Anti-Corn Law League, and of the Complete Suffrage Association and other bodies, which were attended by some of the men who were prominently identified with the Chamber of Commerce, it was evident there was little, if any, opening for the Chamber to intervene and give a pronouncement on non-party lines.

On the 25th June, 1846, the Bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws was read a third time in the House of Lords, and passed without a division. The passing of the Bill

Importation
of Foreign
Corn.

was celebrated by several public dinners, but it appears that the public desired further measures. On November 3rd a large and influential meeting was held in the Town Hall for the purpose of memorialising the Government to open the ports. The Mayor, Mr. W. Scholefield, Mr. George Edmonds, Mr. John Mason, Mr. Alderman Geach, Mr. R. K. Douglas, and Mr. G. F. Muntz, M.P., took part in the proceedings, as did also Mr. R. Spooner, M.P., who said that, although he was opposed to Free Trade, he was not opposed to the objects of that meeting. Among the resolutions passed by the meeting were the following:—

- (1) “ That while this meeting is grateful for the late changes in the Corn Laws, it considers that the duty which is still levied on the importation of foreign corn tends greatly to enhance its price, and its retention in the present state of the nation is altogether indefensible.”
- (2) “ That it appears to this meeting that the issuing of an immediate Order of Council for the opening of the ports to the free and unrestricted admission of all descriptions of human food is the only means of mitigating the existing evil, which is much too pressing and great to await the slow remedy of enactment by a Parliament which may not assemble for some months to come.”

At this period the time for a General Election was drawing near, and the Liberals became earnest to remove what they called the “ discredit ” of having a Conservative member (Mr. R. Spooner) for Birmingham. As a result of the election Mr. Spooner was defeated, but he subsequently became a member for the Northern Division of the County of Warwick.

The
Chamber of
Commerce—
A Necessary
Institution.

From subsequent history it may reasonably be inferred that serious internal trouble took place in the Chamber of Commerce, and that as a consequence its usefulness was somewhat limited. There was, however, important work waiting to be done, and from the succeeding chapter it will be seen that some of the most prominent gentlemen who, in 1842, were appointed on the Committee, elected to prepare rules and regulations for the re-established Chamber, were again selected for a similar purpose. From the historical

point of view it is to be regretted that there were breaks in the continuity of the Chamber between 1813 and 1855, but the re-establishment for the third time as a Chamber of Commerce, or the fourth time, if the Commercial Committee is to be regarded as the direct predecessor of the Chamber, is evidence that the mercantile and manufacturing community had serious need of an organised and non-partisan body to voice their views and lay them before the Government and Parliament. Many other voluntary Associations had been formed between 1783 and 1855, but none of them either endured or were re-established or exist to-day, unless they were and are of an educational or philanthropic character possessing permanent endowments. It may, therefore, reasonably be assumed that Chambers of Commerce have, for at least a century, been regarded by representative business men as indispensable institutions and as the only bodies likely to be able effectually to protect their common interests through the many vicissitudes of party government.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1855.

On the 8th March, 1855, a meeting, convened by advertisement, was held in the Committee Room of the Town Hall to consider the re-establishment of the Chamber. Mr. Charles Shaw occupied the chair, and there were also present :—

W. Matthews	A. Ryland	W. Chance
R. Martineau	Geo. Dixon	J. D. Goodman
T. C. Salt	E. Taunton	John Meyer
S. A. Goddard	Geo. Smith	—, Ward
W. R. Lloyd	Jacob Browett	H. Elwell
G. Downing	Thos. Lloyd	W. L. Gilbert
F. W. Harrold	W. Middlemore	J. S. Wright
S. Buckley	P. H. Muntz	—, Greenway
—, Timmins	Robt. Wright	C. Lingard
	H. Van Wart.	

At this meeting, which, as will be seen from the names mentioned, was attended by gentlemen occupying high social and commercial positions, it was decided to re-establish a Chamber for the Birmingham and Midland District, having for its object the promotion and protection of the trading interests of the district. A Committee was then appointed to prepare laws for the constitution and regulation of the Chamber; and on this Committee, in addition to certain members who were not present at the meeting, the following were appointed:—G. F. Muntz, M.P., W. Scholefield, M.P., W. Chance, Jun., and Arthur Ryland.

This Committee quickly got to work, and on April 5th, 1855, the first General Meeting was held at the Public Office, Moor Street, when the following gentlemen, whose names have not previously been mentioned, were also in attendance:—P. W. Muntz, W. Lucy, Alfred Taylor, T. C. Parsons, Sampson S. Lloyd, John Jaffray, Geo. Smart, —. Hopkins, Hy. Edmunds, Edwd. Barker, Wm. Van Wart, and E. Lander.

Membership
of the
Chamber.

The Committee reported that up to the date of the meeting 120 persons had sent in their names as members—a very satisfactory response to a communication which had been sent through the post only about a fortnight previously. They further reported that they had deemed it essential to the success of the Chamber that the first Council should consist of gentlemen able and willing to discharge efficiently the duties of their office; that they caused a circular to be addressed to about 40 of the leading gentlemen of the neighbourhood, requesting them to state whether they took an interest in the movement, and would, if elected, act on the Council; and that up to the date of the meeting twenty-four had replied in the affirmative.

Election of
Council and
Officers.

The laws and regulations having been adopted, the following gentlemen were appointed to act as the first Council of the re-constituted Chamber, viz.:—

S. H. Blackwell	P. H. Muntz	W. R. Lloyd
S. Buckley	F. Osler	S. S. Lloyd
Edwd. Gem	A. Ryland	W. Mathews
J. D. Goodman	T. C. Salt	C. Sturge

F. W. Harrold	Chas. Shaw	John Stubbs
S. Hartley	Henry Smith	H. Van Wart
W. Holliday	W. James	J. S. Wright
W. Middlemore	Thos. Lloyd	R. Wright

Mr. R. Spooner, M.P., was elected President; Messrs. S. Buckley and S. S. Lloyd, Vice-Presidents; Mr. J. D. Goodman, Treasurer; and Mr. W. L. Gilbert, Hon. Secretary (*pro tem.*). Mr. Henry Howell was shortly afterwards elected Permanent Secretary.

Several Bills introduced into Parliament were discussed, and action taken thereupon. These included the "Hardware Manufacturers' Bill," "The Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes Bill," "The Limited Liabilities Bill," "The Public Health Bill," "The Nuisances Removal Bill," and "The Partnership Amendment Bill." Parliamentary Bills.

A communication was received from the Bristol Chamber of Commerce in favour of the appointment of an Agent for Chambers of Commerce. The communication stated that the suggestion had been sufficiently approved to justify an appointment, but that the replies received led to the inference that too much stress had been laid on the mere question of supplying Parliamentary papers, and that the more important duties which should devolve upon such an agent had not been recognised. Parliamentary Agent in London.

The Bristol Chamber, therefore, recommended that, in addition to the supply of papers, the agent should transmit to each Chamber a weekly analysis of all papers, returns, bills, or reports issued by both Houses of Parliament, and having a direct or indirect bearing on trade, commerce, or navigation; that it should also be part of his duties to keep the Chambers posted up as to any movement in London for any commercial reforms, whether suggested by the mercantile and trading classes or others; and that he should also make arrangements in case of deputations sent to London, and where such deputations may be dispensed with, should himself, if required, make personal representations to Government Departments on behalf of Chambers concerned. It was suggested that the minimum general remuneration to the agent should be £10 per annum from each Chamber joining in the arrangement. The Council approved of the

propriety of appointing an agent in London, and intimated to Bristol their willingness to unite in effecting the object as soon as the necessary details had been considered and agreed upon. At a subsequent Conference between the Bristol, Worcester, Bradford, and Birmingham Chambers, arrangements for the appointment were definitely decided upon.

Income Tax
Reform.

Mr. Ryland brought to the notice of the Council the objects of the Income Tax Reform Association, and the Council decided that the principles upon which the Income Tax and Property Tax were assessed was a subject proper for the consideration of the Chamber of Commerce, and, as a result of this decision, expressed their intention of taking the subject into consideration on the first available opportunity. Shortly afterwards the Association referred to expressed their satisfaction at the intention of the Chamber, and appointed a deputation to wait upon the Council, explain the principles of the Association, and solicit the Chamber's immediate co-operation. The Council resolved that it was inexpedient to consider the question of Income Tax in connection with any other local body, and therefore declined to receive the deputation—at the same time expressing their willingness to receive any communication in writing.

Alleged
Defective
State of
Currency.

Mr. T. C. Salt moved that a Sub-Committee be appointed to draw up a memorial on the "present defective state of the currency," with a view to its amendment, but the motion was not seconded. Evidently the subject was one upon which political parties were acutely divided; and it is significant that of all the subjects which may have been discussed by the Chamber of Commerce between 1841 and 1851 this is the only one of which any record is available.

At a subsequent General Meeting of the Chamber Mr. Salt moved, and Mr. E. Taunton seconded:—"That it is the opinion of this Chamber that the conditions of the renewal of the Bank Charter Act, and the monetary system generally, ought to occupy the serious consideration of the Council," but, on a division being taken, "the motion was declared not carried." At a Special General Meeting held on the 12th September, 1855, a resolution was

however, carried requesting the Council to take into their most serious consideration the present state of the monetary laws.

On the 26th July, 1855, the first Half-Yearly Meeting of the Chamber was held in the Waterloo Rooms, Waterloo Street, when the Council reported that so short a time had elapsed since the re-establishment of the Chamber that they had little more to report than that they had made the necessary arrangements for carrying out the objects desired. The Council reported that the membership had risen to 130, but that they hoped this number would be largely increased when the objects of the Chamber were brought more fully before the public of Birmingham and the neighbourhood.

Serious complaints were made as to the difficulty which had arisen owing to the small amount of copper coinage in circulation, and the Council applied to the Lords of the Treasury to remedy the evil complained of. A reply was received to the effect that if application were made to the Bank of England (Birmingham Branch) for a requisite supply of copper coin, the Master of the Mint would, under the instructions of the Treasury Board, take the necessary measures for supplying the same. The Treasury also stated that they had taken steps to ensure the coinage of such a quantity of copper money as would be sufficient to prevent any inconvenience arising to the public. Shortly afterwards the Bank of England reported that the copper had arrived in Birmingham, and would be issued to the public in amounts of not less than £15.

As a result of the resolution passed at the Special General Meeting previously referred to, the Council appointed a Committee consisting of Mr. R. Spooner, M.P., Mr. Salt, Mr. Stubbs, Mr. Goodman, and Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd to report on the "present state of the monetary laws. In less than a month this Committee presented the following conclusions, which they had unanimously arrived at, and which they recommended for the consideration of the Council:—

- (1) "That had Australian and Californian gold not been discovered the present monetary system could not have been maintained."
- (2) "That the legislature when it passed the last Bank Charter Act in 1844 could not by any possibility have contemplated that discovery."
- (3) "That experience had proved that the provisions in that Charter limiting the issue of notes by the Bank on the Government Debt to fourteen millions, and beyond that to the amount of bullion held by the Bank, are provisions extremely injurious, and not grounded upon any sound principle."
- (4) "That in 1847 these provisions were practically suspended; had that not been the case no man who at all understands such matters can, for a moment, doubt that all the bullion would have been drawn out of the Bank and the notes issued on the fourteen millions of Government Debt could not have been paid."
- (5) "That great fluctuations have taken place in the amount of bullion held by the Bank since the passing of the Act of 1844—such fluctuations compelling the Bank at one time to decrease the amount of Bank Notes in circulation, and thus to create great distress and bankruptcy; and at other times compelling the Bank to purchase gold, and thus vastly to increase its circulation, thereby causing a rapid rise in the price of all property and labour, and thereby creating a temporary prosperity to be followed by a renewed export of gold (the rise in price necessarily producing such export of gold), and that export compelling the Bank again to reduce the amount of their notes, great distress and bankruptcy again becoming the consequence."
- (6) "That the professed object of the Government in proposing the Bank Charter Act of 1844 was to mitigate these fluctuations, and, as far as possible, to ensure a steadiness of price, and as a consequence, a steady and profitable commerce."

- (7) "That no such effect has been produced. The discovery of gold and its continued influx has, in a great degree, lessened these fluctuations, and prevented the whole system from giving way.
- (8) "That the question now is : ' Will the supply of gold continue such as to enable us to meet the unavoidably immense drain caused by the war, and to retain a sufficient quantity for the foundation of a circulatory medium adequate to the wants of the nation ? ' "
- (9) "That this drain will be greatly increased by the necessary import of corn, occasioned by (what is no longer doubted) a great falling off in the crop of wheat for the year 1855."
- (10) "That the Bank of England seems to be quite aware of this, and is already taking most decided steps to check the demand for gold by curtailing the issue of their notes, the effect of which will be to depress prices and thus induce the export of goods rather than gold."
- (11) "That it cannot now be stated that these steps are called for by any wild, dangerous speculations in this country, for trade is known to be more free from speculation than it has long been."
- (12) "That this drain is mainly caused by the Turkish Loan, a measure proposed by Government, and, at their request, sanctioned by Parliament ; secondly, by the amount of gold required to pay our troops in foreign countries ; and now by purchase of wheat being made in every quarter of the world where it can be found."
- (13) "That however stringent such measures may be, it would appear improbable that the drain of gold from these causes can be stopped without the suspension of the Act of 1844."
- (14) "That if a much larger amount of gold from the mines than has hitherto been the case be not immediately produced, the Bank will be compelled in self-defence to diminish its circulation to a point which will occasion great

commercial confusion, bankruptcy, and distress, and render the payment of taxes, the raising of loans, the fulfilment of monetary engagements and the employment of labour exceedingly difficult, if not impossible."

- (15) "That the means enabling the country to carry on and bring to a successful issue the late war were furnished by the adoption of an exactly contrary course of conduct on the part of the Bank than that which, by the Charter of 1844, the Bank is now compelled to adopt, the issue of its notes being then not restricted to the amount of bullion which happened to be in its coffers, but issued to an extent commensurate with the necessary wants of the Government and the legitimate requirements of commerce."
- (16) "That the present law, by permitting the Bank to issue a fixed amount—fourteen millions—of Notes on mere Government debt over and above the Notes for which bullion is held on deposit has proved that, even in times of peace, these wants and requirements cannot be met by a circulation limited by the amount of gold in the Bank."
- (17) "That inasmuch as one main element in price is the amount of legal tender "pounds" in circulation, it is manifestly unjust, by diminishing the amount of such legal tender "pounds" artificially to depress prices of all property, and proportionally to enhance the burden of taxation and all other monetary engagements, merely because of occasional fluctuations in the amount of one article "gold." "
- (18) "That the object to be accomplished is to provide and maintain a sufficient steady circulation of legal tender money for all internal affairs. At present, operations which the public cannot foresee and over which they can exercise no control, can at once derange all existing contracts, and greatly endanger the best interests of the country. As long as gold is the only foundation

of the circulation it is impossible to keep a steady and sufficient circulation. In time of peace it has been found impossible to do so ; how can it be possible in time of war ? ”

In their next Half-Yearly Report the Council stated that they had approached the subject with a deep sense of its importance, knowing the many difficulties with which it was surrounded. All the resolutions of the Sub-Committee, except (1) and (2), were, however, rejected, and in opposition to the views expressed in the remainder the Council declared : “ That the supply of gold incidental to these discoveries has hitherto been sufficiently abundant to ensure the practical conversion of Bank of England notes into gold, and in the expectation that these supplies will continue at the same rate of abundance it is inexpedient for the Council, notwithstanding the recent exportations of gold, to recommend any immediate alteration of the existing law.” The conclusion thus arrived at was, however, considered so far unsatisfactory that the Council resolved at a subsequent meeting that the matter should be reconsidered, and a newly-formed Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. T. C. Salt, Mr. John Stubbs, Mr. J. D. Goodman, and Mr. J. S. Wright, was desired to draw up a report. This report was presented and rejected ; and, finally, after some discussion, the views of the Council were embodied in the following resolution :—

Fate of the
Resolutions.

“ That it is the opinion of this Council that it will be found impossible, without great injury to every interest, to carry on the war to an issue consistent with the honour and safety of the country under the present monetary system ; and that it is the incumbent duty of Parliament to take into immediate consideration the effect produced by the Acts of 1819 and 1844, with the view of calling out the energy and power of the nation.”

At an earlier period the Council had decided to give greater publicity to their proceedings, but with respect to the question of the monetary laws, no doubt having regard to the serious controversy involved, they were evidently desirous of keeping the differences of opinion private, for, on the 14th November, 1855, they

Communica-
tion to the
Press.

observed in a resolution that they had witnessed "with the strongest disapprobation" the communication to the press of the private resolution of their Sub-Committee and of the proceedings of the Council at the previous meeting, and deemed "any private and unauthorised publications on the part of any member of the Council—or officer of the Chamber—of any of its minutes, documents, or proceedings, to be a most culpable and unwarrantable breach of confidence." In consequence of the unauthorised publication, the president was authorised to make known the actual facts of the case, to give particulars of the voting, and to intimate that the Chairman (to wit, the President of the Chamber, Mr. R. Spooner, M.P.) "declined to vote."

Income Tax.
Property
Tax.

In pursuance of the decision previously arrived at, the Council appointed a Sub-Committee, consisting of Messrs. Edward Gem, Sampson S. Lloyd, and S. Buckley, to report on the question of Income and Property Tax. The report of this Sub-Committee, which was adopted by the Council on the 18th December, 1855, was as follows:—

"That the present system of assessing all descriptions of income at the same annual rate per cent. is very unjust in principle, and prejudicial to the commercial progress of the nation.

"That the arbitrary and irresponsible inquisitorial powers vested in the Commissioners of Property and Income Tax are, as at present exercised, unnecessary for the protection of the revenue, and most injurious and oppressive in their operation to the commercial classes.

"Your Committee have purposely confined their resolutions to a few of the more obvious and tangible evils of the present system, and, with this view, beg to suggest that the efforts of the Council be directed to the following points, viz. :—

"That income derived from profits of trade, from the practice of professions, or from salaries or wages, be assessed at a lower rate per cent. than that derived from realized property.

“That terminable and life annuities be assessed in such proportion only to income derived from realised property as the value of such annuity (estimated according to some well authenticated tables) bears to the value of a permanent annuity of like amount.

“That, on appeal (in cases relating to income derived from professions, or from the profits of trade), a statement, supported by the solemn declaration of the taxpayer that no other than certain legally definite and specified deductions from gross profits, have been made in his return, yet that his profits do not exceed the sum so returned by him, should be final.

“That more stringent measures be adopted to enforce the strictest privacy as to returns when made to the Government officers, and that everyone paying Income Tax to the collector be permitted to do so without the presence, at the time of paying, of anyone but himself and the collector.”

In view of the fact that the administration and incidence of Income Tax are still the subject of serious discussion and criticism on the part of Chambers of Commerce, the report which has just been quoted is of great interest, especially as at least one of the points which induced criticism has been remedied, viz. :— a discrimination has been made between “earned” and “unearned” income, whilst the preservation of secrecy as to individual returns has been very much more carefully guarded. It is not desired to suggest that these changes have been made simply because the Chamber of Commerce of Birmingham, some fifty-eight years ago, made certain representations, but as legislation is very frequently the result of cumulative pressure, the Chamber may fairly claim to have been early advocates of principles which they have subsequently on many occasions put forward. They may also very reasonably claim that they helped to bring about some of the modifications made in the Income Tax Laws since the date of the above report.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1856.

Parliamentary
Agent in
London.

At the Half-Yearly Meeting of the Chamber on the 31st January, 1856, it was reported that the appointment of a London agent, to which reference has been made, was conferred on Mr. Leone Levi, a gentleman favourably known to the commercial world as a writer on International Law and other subjects; and that in making the appointment the Council had acted in conjunction with the Chambers of Commerce of Hull, Belfast, Bradford, Stoke-upon-Trent, Worcester, and Bristol. It was the belief of the Council that the appointment would result beneficially by uniting the action of the several Chambers, and by the more systematic diffusion of information on subjects requiring their notice. Herein we see what subsequently became the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

Irregular
Attendance
of two Mem-
bers of the
Council.

At the meeting referred to above reference was made to the non-attendance of two members of the Council during the previous year, and whilst deciding that it was inexpedient to elect two members in their places, the Council directed the secretary to write to the gentleman referred to "requesting their more regular attendance during the ensuing year."

Monetary
Laws.

At the General Meeting on the 31st January, 1856, Mr. T. C. Salt moved, and Mr. Edmund Taunton seconded, a motion to the effect that the fluctuations that had taken place in the supply of money since the passing of the "Monetary Bills of 1819 and 1844," proved that those Bills had not regulated the supply to commercial wants, and that the Council should continue to devote their attention to the consideration of the question, "with a view to come to some practical results." An amendment, moved by Mr. Thomas Lloyd, and seconded by Mr. J. D. Goodman, was carried by 16 votes to 2, in which it was stated that "inasmuch as in compliance with the wishes of some of the members of the Chamber," the question of

an alteration of the Monetary Laws had been brought before the Council, "where it received long and careful examination," the Chamber would not recommend any further discussion until the subject was brought before Parliament.

During the past few years the Birmingham Chamber, and others acting through the Association of Chambers of Commerce, have urged the Government to provide greater facilities for the transfer of Consols, the suggestion made being that the procedure should be assimilated to that relating to the transfer of stock or shares in joint stock Companies. It is interesting, therefore, to record that early in 1856 the Chamber memorialised the Chancellor of the Exchequer to grant increased facilities to Birmingham and all other provincial towns in which a Branch of the Bank of England was established "for the purchase and transfer of Government stock and the receipt of dividends."

Transfer of
Government
Stocks.

During the course of this work many instances will appear where measures advocated by the Chamber of Commerce were not actually legislated upon for many years afterwards. An instance occurs in 1856, when a Bill was introduced with the object of affording facilities for private firms or traders to grant a share of their profits as remuneration either for capital advanced to them by way of loans, or for services rendered, "without involving corresponding liability (as heretofore) to the engagements of the concern." The Council approved of the general principle that the utmost freedom of association for all the lawful purposes of trade should be permitted and every facility afforded for assistance being given to the industrious and skilful by capitalists who would be unwilling to become liable as general partners. They were, however, unanimously of opinion that "to prevent such facilities engendering fraud" it was essential that registration of all such privileged loans should be made compulsory, and that "privileged creditors who would thus enjoy the superior knowledge of a partner" should not be permitted in the anticipation of insolvency to withdraw their capital to the detriment of other creditors, so that, in all cases where the principle of limited liability was

The Law of
Partnership.

recognised, all needful publicity should be given to the relative positions of the partners and the public. The Council, however, regretted to observe that "on this principle being affirmed by the House of Commons in an amendment to the Government measure," the Bill was withdrawn altogether. It was hoped that a more perfect measure would be introduced in the following session, and the Council said they would spare no efforts to bring the subject again before the Legislative. If guarded by the provisions the Council had always recommended, they looked upon such a measure as of the highest importance to the trading community, the "more especially since the passing of the Joint Stock Companies' Act," which accorded the principal of limited liability to co-partnerships of so small a number as seven persons. In view of this enactment they expressed their anxiety to secure for the private trader like facilities, with a view to ensure, as far as possible, his not being placed at a disadvantage in competition with small Companies enjoying the advantages of limited liability. At the same time, however, they required, for the protection of the public, such publicity, with reference to all special advances of capital, as should effectually prevent undue advantage being taken by partners making such advances. It is interesting to note that over half-a-century elapsed before the Limited Partnerships Act, 1907, was passed into law, but it is a reasonable inference that it would not even then have been enacted had it not been for the efforts and the guidance of the Chambers of Commerce.

Registration of Firms.

In the same year the Chamber earnestly pressed upon their members and the public generally the justice and desirability of obtaining "a compulsory registry of the members actually composing all trading co-partnerships whatever" as tending to prevent fraud and to assist in the identification of the partners of a firm where legal proceedings might become necessary. Such a provision, it was pointed out, already applied to all Bankers, and was especially recommended by Her Majesty's Mercantile Law Commissioners; and since the petition of the Birmingham Chamber in February, 1856, it was "gratifying to observe" that the principle had also been advocated by other

important Chambers of Commerce in the kingdom. In a subsequent report the Council say that

“This subject is one which originated with this Chamber,”

and that an increasing interest was being taken in it. It is, however, a subject upon which definite legislation has not yet resulted, but the Chamber has for many years past constantly petitioned in favour of the Registration of Firms Bill, and will, no doubt, continue to do so until the desired end is obtained.

A Bill entitled the Mercantile Law Amendment Bill was before Parliament in 1856, the object of which was to assimilate the laws of England and Scotland on certain points on which they were then at variance. The Council cordially approved of the provisions of the Bill, with the exception of Clauses 1 and 2, which (by the repeal of Section 17 of the Statute of Frauds) would have deprived traders of the protection which they had previously enjoyed, viz.:—of the impossibility of enforcing against them alleged contracts for the value of £10 and upwards unless they were in writing. In their half-yearly report the Council had the satisfaction of stating that “in deference to the remonstrances of certain commercial bodies” the Government had withdrawn the obnoxious clauses.

Mercantile
Law Amend-
ment Bill.

The Chamber was officially invited to co-operate with a meeting of the “Belgian Free Trade Association” in a Congress held at Brussels on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th September, 1856, the object of the Congress being “to obtain the removal of restrictions upon commerce and to promote the free interchange of produce and manufactures between all nations.” It was decided to accept the invitation, and Mr. Wm. Scholefield, M.P., was appointed as the delegate to attend the Congress. In order to furnish him with all possible information, merchants, manufacturers, and others interested in the trade and commerce of the district, were asked for particulars of “any obstacles, duties, prohibitions, etc., etc.,” which might be found to impede the introduction of their manufactures and consignments into other countries. The Sub-Committee appointed to collect the information subsequently reported

Belgian
Free Trade
Congress.

that information was received from two parties only, viz.:—Messrs. Chance Bros. and Co. and Messrs. Hammond Turner and Co. Notwithstanding, however, that the Council were “deprived of the advice and co-operation of the parties peculiarly interested in promoting the removal of restrictions upon trade,” they prepared a table exhibiting in general terms the scale of duties levied upon Birmingham manufacturers in most of the chief commercial centres of the world, and this table was handed to Mr. Scholefield for presentation to the Congress. Mr. Scholefield was subsequently thanked very cordially for the readiness with which he complied with the request to attend the Congress, and “for the liberal manner in which he carried out that request.”

The Belgian
Tariff.

Just before this time the Chamber received a communication from the Lords of the Privy Council with reference to a proposed revision of the Belgian Customs Tariff. Messrs. Thomas Lloyd, Edward Gem, Geo. Downing, G. A. Everitt, J. B. Browett, and J. H. Hopkins, acting as a Sub-Committee, reported very fully on the proposals, and in their next half-yearly report the Council stated that they had communicated with the Lords of the Privy Council expressing satisfaction at the proposed revision as tending to an increased trade between the two countries, particularly in certain descriptions of iron and tinplates; suggesting that other reductions contemplated would tend still further in the same direction; and urging the Government to make a representation to Belgium upon “the propriety of making a reduction in the duty on all manufactured goods to the same extent as on metals.” The report continued:—“It is particularly gratifying to the Council to note that in the list of duties to be reduced they find five items included to which they called special attention at the Belgian Conference through their representative, Mr. Scholefield.”

A Year of
Considerable
Activity.

Taken as a whole, and comparing it with other years, the year 1856 may be regarded as one of considerable activity on the part of the Chamber, and many matters were discussed and decided upon which, owing to the exigencies of space, it is impossible to refer to in this work in detail. For instance, cognizance was taken of the

“Joint Stock Companies’ Bill,” the “Local Dues on Shipping Bill,” “The County Court Amendment Bill,” “The Law of Evidence and Procedure Bill,” the unsatisfactory state of the Bankruptcy Laws and the question of Income Tax and Paper Duties, the repeal of the latter being advocated. In urging the support of all business men the Council asserted that “Chambers of Commerce are rapidly acquiring an increased importance among the inhabitants of the country, as is evidenced by the amount of attention their proceedings attract.” At the annual meeting the Council were thanked for “the arduous and diligent attention to their duties.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1857.

On the 27th January, 1857, a Conference summoned by the Law Amendment Society was held in London, to take into consideration questions urgently requiring the attention of Parliament. Mr. S. S. Lloyd and Mr. J. D. Goodman attended on behalf of the Chamber, which recommended the following subjects for discussion:—

- The Law of Partnership ;
- The Bankruptcy Laws ;
- The Local Dues on Shipping ;
- The Consolidation and Revision of the Statutes of Commercial Law ;
- Tribunals of Commerce ;
- Assimilation, as far as possible, of the Commercial Laws of England, Ireland, and Scotland ;
- Uniformity of Weights and Measures ;
- The Law of Banking.

In preparation for the Conference, the Law of Banking required special consideration, and a Sub-Committee, consisting of Messrs. Richard Spooner, George Downing, S. Buckley, Edward Gem, T. Lloyd, and Wm.

Mercantile
Conference.

The Law of
Banking.

Holliday, was appointed with instructions to confer with the delegates appointed to attend the Conference, and to report. The Sub-Committee reported that the Laws relating to Banking and the Issue of Notes required reconstruction—

“First :—Because since the passing of the Bank Charter fixing the amount of banking issues, the population has greatly increased, the basis of commercial trading vastly extended, and the annual taxation largely augmented, whilst the late discoveries of gold in California and Australia have disturbed the monetary relations of the country.”

“Second :—That the question is of vital importance, inasmuch as whatever the various opinions of men may be as to the basis of the currency, it has been found that in periods of panic, an alleviation has been obtained by the suspension of the laws in force.”

“Third :—That the present is peculiarly the time for consideration, because the Bank Charter is open for revision, and as the country is not now under the immediate pressure of distress or panic, the subject may be more calmly discussed.”

The
Delegates’
Report.

On the 17th February, 1857, Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd and Mr. J. D. Goodman signed an exhaustive report on the proceedings at the two days’ conference, and, after stating that they availed themselves of the opportunity of urging the views of the Chamber in regard to the subjects discussed, expressed the opinion that “on this important and interesting occasion” they might “safely assert that the opinions expressed by the Chamber” had exercised a sensible and beneficial influence on some of the resolutions adopted by the conference, especially on the subjects of Bankruptcy and the Registration of Partnerships. The Council subsequently voted £25 towards a fund raised for the purpose of carrying into effect the decisions come to at the conference, and the delegates were cordially thanked for their services and “valuable report.”

The Suez
Canal.

On the 3rd June, 1857, a Special Meeting of the Chamber was held to hear the explanation of M.

Ferdinand de Lesseps, relative to the "proposed ship canal across the Isthmus of Suez." After Mr. Lange, on behalf of M. de Lesseps, had explained the objects and advantages of the proposal, the Chamber resolved unanimously :—

"That this Chamber, viewing the question of the advisability of a route across the Isthmus of Suez, as submitted to them by M. Lesseps, strictly in (*sic*) a commercial point of view is of opinion that it would be highly advantageous to this country if some safe and speedy route for shipping between Europe and India could be carried out ; that the proposed direct ship canal across the Isthmus of Suez appears to afford the facilities desired and at the same time to supersede the circuitous and expensive route round the Cape of Good Hope ; that it is most desirable that the delay consequent upon the transhipment of merchandise at any intermediate station should be avoided as would be the case were the district traversed by a railway." (*sic*.)

A memorial founded upon this resolution was approved, and ordered to be presented to the Board of Trade, and M. Ferdinand de Lesseps and Mr. Lange were thanked for their presence and the courtesy and readiness with which they had afforded the Chamber every explanation required.

As has been seen, the Birmingham delegates took a very active part in the proceedings of the Mercantile Conference convened by the Law Amendment Society, and the Chamber voted a donation of £25 towards the cost of putting into effect the resolutions passed thereat. On the 15th June, 1857, slightly less than six months after the conference, the Council appeared to be quite dissatisfied with the subsequent want of activity, for they passed a resolution stating that, inasmuch as the Committee appointed at the conference to prepare a Bill for the Amendment of the Law of Bankruptcy had not been summoned, the Council held itself at liberty to take independent action on the matter in any way they might think proper. Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, J. D. Goodman, J. S. Wright, and Arthur Ryland were, at the next meeting,

Bankruptcy
Laws.

appointed as a Sub-Committee to prepare a draft of a Bill for the amendment of the Bankruptcy Laws, and under their directions such a Bill was prepared by Mr. Fry, of Lincoln's Inn, an analysis of which was widely circulated in Birmingham and the leading commercial towns. The independent action of the Chamber led to important results. On the invitation of the Secretary of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science the Council of the Chamber prepared a paper explanatory of the provisions of their Bill for discussion at the first meeting of the Association held in Birmingham in October, 1857, and this was read on the 14th October in the Jurisprudence Section of the Association. In the interesting discussion which followed, the principles embodied in the Bill met with general approval, though several members present expressed a desire for a still more extensive measure of reform on certain points. At the suggestion of Lord John Russell (the Chairman of the Jurisprudence Section) a Committee was ultimately appointed consisting of three delegates from the National Association and two from each Chamber of Commerce and Trade Protection Society in the kingdom for the purpose of framing a Bill to be submitted to Parliament in the next session. This Committee met in Birmingham on the 17th and 18th November, and after passing a series of resolutions embodying the principles on which the Bill should be framed, appointed a Sub-Committee of nine of its members (including two members of the Council of the Chamber) to prepare a new Bill, based on these resolutions, which should provide not only greater stringency and certainty in the penal operation of the law and other reforms contemplated by the Bill prepared on behalf of the Chamber, but also the entire codification of the Statute Law on Bankruptcy and Insolvency, and the administration of the estates of all insolvent persons (traders or non-traders) on the same principle and under the same jurisdiction. In the meantime Lord Brougham had introduced into the House of Lords a Bill on Bankruptcy Reform, which the Council felt omitted some of the most important and necessary amendments that were desired, and a Sub-Committee was at once appointed to watch it in the

interests of the Chamber, and the Committee afterwards appointed at the Congress convened by the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. The latter Committee met shortly afterwards and completed its instruction for the draftsman. In the next half-yearly report the Council said:—"To complete this arduous undertaking and to print and circulate the Bill in detail a sum of about £400 will be required, towards which the various Chambers of Commerce will be asked to contribute." The expenditure already made by the Chamber in the cause of Bankruptcy Reform (including the donation of £25 voted to the Law Amendment Society) had, however, absorbed its surplus funds, and the Council therefore appealed "to the members of the Chamber and the commercial public for some small special contributions to enable them to present a donation of £25 or £30" towards the work which the new Sub-Committee had in hand. "Under the circumstances," the report continued, "the Council deem it expedient to defer for the present the prosecution of" their own Bill as a separate measure. They had the "gratification of feeling assured that the labour and expense devoted to its preparation" had not been in vain, but that, on the contrary, they had "materially tended to develop and assist this more extended and national movement" then in progress under whose auspices they trusted "that the universal desire for the reform of this blot" on the English commercial code might "meet with ultimate success."

In October, 1857, the Chamber was greatly honoured by a visit from Dr. Livingstone, who, "in a most able and interesting address, explained the course of his travels and the advantages to commerce which might be expected from further explorations." The "learned doctor" was cordially thanked for his kindness in meeting the members of the Chamber, and "for his exceedingly able and interesting address," and the Chamber expressed the hope that the Government would adopt such measures as would enable Dr. Livingstone "to test the practicability of opening up the trade of that country."

Visit of Dr.
Livingstone.

Depressed
Trade and
The Bank
Charter Act.

On November 27th, 1857, a deputation, consisting of Mr. J. D. Goodman, Mr. George Downing, and Mr. J. S. Wright, was appointed to confer with the Wolverhampton Chamber "upon the immediate steps necessary to be taken on the present commercial crisis." Evidently the matter was deemed to be serious, for at Eleven o'clock on the following morning the conference took place at "a somewhat numerous meeting" at Wolverhampton—the Mayor and Town Clerk of that town being also present. The report of the deputation was received at a meeting of the Council of the Birmingham Chamber on the same day. In this most interesting report reference was made to the impending "suffering to the working classes thrown out of employment" owing to the depressed condition of trade in the district. In the absence of Mr. Goodman, who was unexpectedly summoned to London, Mr. Downing introduced the business to the conference by referring "to the commercial difficulties of the past month and the consequent stagnation of trade." After mentioning the suspension of the Bank Charter Act, the high rate of discount, and the prospects for the "coming winter," Mr. Downing stated to the conference that on the previous day the Council of the Birmingham Chamber expressed the view that these matters were of sufficient importance to justify a deputation to Lord Palmerston to urge upon the Government the necessity of submitting to Parliament on its assembling in the following week "some measures for the relief of the country." The chairman of the Wolverhampton Chamber stated that at the moment the working classes of Wolverhampton had not suffered to any considerable extent, and that they would, therefore, scarcely feel themselves justified in interfering with the iron district of South Staffordshire, "that being under the care of the iron masters." Mr. J. S. Wright urged, in support of Mr. Downing's views, the "necessity of anticipating the difficulties which were so certainly impending, not in the spirit of alarmists, but because remedial measures could be more carefully considered" than "when the pressure became more serious, and because it was the duty of the commercial community to prevent if possible a recurrence of the present crisis." Continuing

their report the deputation then stated that an interesting discussion ensued, in which it became evident that the Wolverhampton Chamber hesitated to take part in any measure savouring of the "Birmingham Currency School," and in reply to which Mr. Downing stated that the Birmingham Chamber had adopted no specific views or measures, but were only anxious that the subject should be carefully considered. Mr. Downing was then pressed "for his own ideas on the matter," and, on these being stated, they were received with "marked attention and general approval." The Wolverhampton Chamber then requested to be informed of any proposition Birmingham might agree upon, and promised it their most careful consideration, and, "if possible, their warmest support." No further reference is made in the records to the Wolverhampton Chamber, so that it is probable that, having regard to the apathetic and suspicious manner in which the deputation was received, their co-operation was no longer sought.

On the 5th December, 1857, a special meeting of the Chamber, which was influentially, if not numerously, attended, was convened to consider the failure of the Bank Charter Act, and Mr. Downing (who presided) said that they "had considered it their duty, as a Chamber of Commerce representing the Midland Metropolis of this country, to do something more than to meet periodically and make speeches." They had, he explained, seen the country subject decennially to crises and panics, such as had just recurred, which had had the most serious effect upon commercial interests. He continued that opinion was divided as to the most available means of remedying such an evil, but when they saw an Act of Parliament to which they had been taught to look for safety in these emergencies, had failed, and that it had been lately infringed by a deliberate act of the Prime Minister, they could not imagine that that law had received that careful consideration at the hands of the legislature as its vital importance demanded. If, he added, it was desirable and necessary that the Prime Minister should suspend the Act, as he did in the month before the meeting, "why was it not necessary before; and, if not necessary before, why

Failure of
The Bank
Charter Act.

was it then ? ” In his opinion some measure ought to be devised which would “detect and bring down the dishonest trader without affecting the honest and upright trader at the same time.” The Council had discussed the whole subject at length, and had framed a petition to the House of Commons embodying their opinion that the Bank Charter Act had not fulfilled the intention of its originator, and suggesting a remedy. The petition, which was then read, recited that the Act had failed to accomplish the objects of its author, Sir Robert Peel, who stated :—

“That it would prevent the fluctuations which had taken place in our currency, defeating all the calculations on which commercial enterprise could rest, give steadiness to the character of our resources, inspire confidence in our circulating medium, diminish all inducements to fraudulent speculations and gambling, and ensure its just reward to commercial enterprise conducted with honesty and secured by patience.”

It was then contended that the operation of the Act had been, by forcing the Bank of England to buy bullion whenever it flowed into the country, whether they wanted it or not, to reduce interest to an unreasonably low rate and to raise it when bullion had been exported to any extent. Furthermore, it was pointed out that since the passing of the Act it had been twice suspended in times of crisis, and that it would be better to repeal it than to allow it to remain subject to such suspension. It was, therefore, urged that the power granted to the Bank to issue its own notes to the extent of £16,000,000 of Government Debt should be withdrawn, and that the Government should be authorised to create “national paper” to such an amount as might discharge the debt due by the Government to the Bank, and such further sums as might seem fit, subject to the amount not exceeding one-fourth of the annual revenue. Continuing their petition the Council recommended that the notes should be in such denominations as might be found convenient for the general purposes of the country, and should be made legal tender and payable in taxes in all parts of the United Kingdom ; and also that the power to issue notes by the Bank of England, against bullion and gold, should be continued,

such notes to be legal tender in all parts of the Kingdom, except by the "Bank" itself to the holders of such notes.

Mr. J. S. Wright moved, and Mr. G. A. Everitt seconded, the adoption of the memorial. Mr. E. Taunton moved as an amendment that a memorial which had been numerously signed in favour of the abolition of the Bank Charter Act, and which he produced, should be sent to the Queen. This amendment was not seconded, and Mr. T. C. Salt then moved that the petition be referred back to the Committee who framed it, and that his name be added to the Committee. Mr. Brooke Smith seconded, and after the meeting had been addressed by Messrs. W. R. Lloyd and Henry Manton, Mr. G. F. Boddington submitted in a further amendment that the whole of the second portion of the amendment, viz., that suggesting a remedy, be omitted. This was seconded by Mr. J. H. Hopkins. After some further discussion, in which Mr. John Cartland, Mr. J. B. Browett, and Mr. Henry Rotton took part, the amendments were put and lost, and the petition, being put as the substantive or original motion, was also negatived. Consequently the proceedings, which lasted two hours and a half, ended without any practical result being arrived at on this complicated and much vexed question.

CHAPTER XXIX.

1858.

A Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. G. A. Everitt and Mr. J. S. Wright, had been appointed in 1857 to prepare the "heads of a Bill for the purpose of giving greater supervision over Marine Store Dealers." This Committee availed itself of the advice and co-operation of Mr. Scholefield M.P., Mr. Kynnersley (the Stipendiary Magistrate), Mr. Samuel Thornton, and Mr. W. R. Lloyd, and was able to obtain most valuable information as to the

Thefts of
Metal—
Marine Store
Dealers.

criminal results arising from the facilities afforded for the sale of stolen metals. From this it appears that 222 prisoners were charged in 1856, and 232 in 1857, and the the greatest number of cases was in regard to thefts of copper, brass, mixed metal, iron, and lead. The outline of a Bill was prepared and laid before the Solicitor-General by Mr. Scholefield, M.P., and in their half-yearly report the Council said they had good reasons for believing that, under the sanction of the Government, the suggestion would be introduced into a Bill for amending and consolidating the laws relating to Larceny and other similar offences, and which was then about to be introduced by the Attorney-General. Briefly summarised, the chief proposals made by the Council were as follows:—(1) Compulsory licensing of Dealers in Marine Stores and old metals; (2) No purchase before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m.; (3) Full registration of all purchases, with details as to name of seller, price, and hour of purchase; (4) Retention of metal (or metal goods) for three clear days in the state in which it was purchased; (5) Production of goods and books to police officer on demand; (6) Restoration of stolen goods on proof of ownership; and (7) Exemption for manufacturers rated at £30 per annum and upwards in respect of their business premises.

**Bankruptcy
and Insol-
vency Laws.**

The Council had energetically continued their work on the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Laws, and the Bill for the amendment thereof which was prepared by the Committee of Delegates of Chambers of Commerce and Trade Protection Societies, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was introduced by Lord John Russell and Mr. Headlam (M.P. for Newcastle-on-Tyne) on the 22nd June. After giving the Bill their most careful consideration the Council felt "bound to advocate it as the most valuable and comprehensive scheme of reform on this subject which has yet been propounded." Its adoption, the Council stated in their half-yearly report, "would secure the following among other important benefits:— Firstly, the consolidation into one Act of the entire Statute Law of Bankruptcy and Insolvency, now scattered over about twenty different statutes; Secondly, the administration of the estates of all insolvent persons

(whether traders or non-traders) under the same jurisdiction and on a uniform system ; Thirdly, the administration of the estates of deceased insolvent persons in bankruptcy instead of in Chancery, as at present ; Fourthly, great reduction in the present enormous expenses of administration by the transfer to the consolidated fund of the judicial salaries and of the pensions to retired officers ; by the abolition of useless offices ; and by simplification of the mode of procedure ; Fifthly, greatly increased control by the creditors over the mode of realisation and distribution of the assets under the superintendence of the Court and an option to them in the first instance to determine to work the bankruptcy in the District Court or in any local County Court as may be most convenient to the majority in value ; Sixthly, increased certainty and efficiency in the operation of the penal clauses against reckless and fraudulent insolvents." Commenting further upon these proposals the Council said their beneficial effect was "not a mere matter of conjecture," but had been demonstrated by practical experience in Scotland. The Government, it was also stated, had been engaged in preparing a Bill on the subject of a much less comprehensive character, which they had abandoned for the session, proposing to content themselves with a mere revision of the rules and orders which the Lord Chancellor had the power to make. Whilst not denying that much incidental benefit might be obtained in this way, the Council expressed their earnest hope that the commercial community would not accept "so tardy and imperfect a concession to public feeling" as any substitute for that entire and searching reform of the entire system which "public morality and integrity" demanded and which a "little longer perseverance in agitation" would enable them "at no distant date to obtain."

Reference was again made in 1858 to the importance of publication, by some legislative enactment, of the names of those who were actual partners in firms carrying on business "under general and sometimes even fictitious names," and the Council declared that this publication had become imperative in order that creditors might

Registration
of
Partnerships

be enabled to comply with the letter of the law in all proceedings for the recovery of debts and other legal process. In their report the Council claim "credit for having first urged the subject upon the attention of the legislature." During the session of 1858 a Bill for the Registration of Partnerships was introduced by Lord Goderich, but the machinery proposed to be used, viz. :—Registration by means of the Superintendent Registrars of Births, appeared so "cumbrous and inappropriate" that, whilst the Council petitioned the House in support of the measure in principle, they urged that the registration should be effected through the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies. The Bill was withdrawn at its second reading, and another Bill, with amended details, promised for the next session.

Joint Stock
Banking
Companies.

The Council considered the Joint Stock Banking Companies' Bill, the object of which was to enable Banking Companies to be formed on the principle of limited liability, and petitioned in favour of it, "considering it to be an uniformly sound principle of commercial legislation to permit all persons to make contracts with one another in trade on any conditions they please, provided the public have due notice of those conditions and that effectual provision be made for the prevention of fraud." At the time of preparing their report the Bill only awaited the Royal assent to become law.

French
Immigration
Scheme.

The attention of the Council was called to the practical revival of the Slave Trade under the system of the French Government for the supply of additional labour to her West Indian and South American Colonies by the purchase of slaves on the African coast under contract for ten years' service. The papers were referred to a Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. Charles Sturge, Mr. Thomas Lloyd, and Mr. J. D. Goodman, and on their report a memorial was presented to Lord Clarendon urging upon the attention of Her Majesty's Ministers the propriety of inducing the French Government to abandon its scheme, and, in preference, to encourage that legitimate commerce which was "the only means of effecting the civilisation of Africa."

A memorial was presented to his Majesty's Government, in which it was recited that in the year 1842 Sir James Brooke obtained from "the late Sultan of Borneo" a cession of the territory and government of the country of Sarawak, "which cession was duly noted to Her Majesty's Government at the time." The people of Sarawak contested the claims of the Sultan of Borneo, but ultimately ratified the cession, which was confirmed in 1853 by the then reigning Sultan—subject only to the payment of 4,000 dollars on the demise of each Rajah of Sarawak. In the memorial it was then stated that Sir James Brooke had ruled the territory referred to for seventeen years with the knowledge and consent of the British Government, and that during that time he had "repressed piracy, advanced trade, and maintained order and good government." Incidentally it was mentioned that the British Government in 1845 and 1846 acknowledged Sir James Brooke as Rajah, and sanctioned a Sarawak flag, and that the territory under the rule of Sir James was formally recognised by the President of the United States of America with the knowledge of the British Government by the appointment of an Envoy with power to negotiate a treaty or otherwise. It was then declared that the Rajah was desirous of ceding the territory to England, and the Chamber therefore urged that a Parliamentary inquiry might be "made" into the advantages that would be likely to result to civilisation and commerce from taking possession of the territory and how far such territory might be ceded to and occupied by the Government of this country "with equity to Sir James Brooke, to the natives of Sarawak, and to the Government of Borneo."

Territory of
Sarawak.

In October, 1858, a memorial was presented to the Earl of Derby, First Lord of the Treasury, praying that the "Weedon Commission now sitting" should be authorised to extend their inquiry to the system of Government contracts generally, and requesting permission to tender evidence. Unfortunately no copy of this memorial is available in the Chamber's records, although space was left for it to be inserted in the minutes. It appears, however, that a reply was received from the Lords of the Treasury

Government
Contracts.

stating that they did not think it desirable to extend the inquiry as desired, as they had no reason to believe that the subject required investigation. The Council were dissatisfied with this reply, and, availing themselves of the opportunity afforded by their lordship's permission to forward any statement on the subject, they wrote a further letter on the 28th October, 1858, stating that the conditions usually attached to Government contracts were of such a nature as to deter many of the most respectable manufacturers from sending in tenders; that they were open to great abuses; that the forms of tender were, in many cases, unreasonable and contradictory and calculated to lead to the supply of inferior articles at higher prices than those at which more modern and superior articles could be obtained; and that for these and other reasons they urged upon their lordships the need for an inquiry to be made into the system of contracts generally, "having no doubt of being able to produce ample evidence to show that the present system introduces a class of middlemen who come between the manufacturer and the Government, and who, to cover the risk attendant on their corrupt practices, obtain higher prices than would be required by parties dealing directly with the Government." In their resolution, which formed the basis of this letter, the Council declared that the system was such that "respectable manufacturers" were unwilling to tender, the result being that "other manufacturers supply Government stores through third parties at an increased cost to the Government," and that the Council was "in possession of evidence in support of this statement." Notwithstanding that they were already in possession of evidence on the subject, the Council were anxious to obtain further information, and they therefore advertised for further particulars to be sent to them by any manufacturer interested before the 4th November, and appointed a committee, consisting of the Vice-President (Mr. George Downing), Mr. J. D. Goodman, Mr. G. A. Everitt, Mr. E. Peyton, Mr. J. B. Browett, Mr. J. S. Wright, and Mr. J. Booth to obtain evidence and to lay the same before Her Majesty's Commissioners.

A reply was received from the Lords of the Treasury, and a Committee, consisting of Messrs. Downing, Browett, T. Lloyd, Peyton, and Booth, was appointed to prepare a suitable response, whilst the President was requested in the meantime to acknowledge the letter and to state that steps would be immediately taken "to establish the allegations" contained in the letter of the 28th October above referred to. The report of the Committee, which was presented in less than a fortnight, stated that sufficient information had been received to confirm the opinions previously expressed by the Council and to show the necessity for very considerable alterations in the forms and conditions of tender. The principal points to which exception was taken appeared to be :—

- (1) "That the power of Inspectors was irresponsible and arbitrary, so that whether their rejection of goods was just or unjust, their knowledge sound, or they were ignorant of the article inspected, the contractor was bound by their '*ipse dixit*,' and had no right of appeal."
- (2) "That the requirement of sureties, and references even as to those sureties, and the liabilities of the contractor and such sureties, being for no fixed amount but for damages alleged to have been sustained and to be incurred, whether any damage may or may not have been suffered by the Government, were unreasonable and unfair, as the most trifling delay in replacing any rejected goods might be made the ground of a demand for damages from which there would be no appeal."
- (3) "That the requirement to contract for unknown quantities, at the will of the Government, was unjust, inasmuch as in the case of prices subsequently advancing, the contractors might be called upon for greater, or on a reduction of prices, for lesser quantities."
- (4) "That frequently incongruous articles were included in one tender form, with the stipulation that all must be tendered for, and that the form of contract was, in some cases, unreasonable and contradictory

and could only be safely complied with by those having 'private means of knowing the probable quantities required.' Instances were given of iron goods, copper, brass, and tin goods of various weights and sizes as being included all in one tender with fixed prices attached thereto—the whole to be contracted for at one common percentage, whilst iron might be "reduced 20 to 40 per cent., copper advanced 20 to 30 per cent., tin remain stationary, and brass be only advanced or reduced some 5 or 10 per cent."

- (5) "That articles of obsolete pattern were still required by the Government 'often composed of many parts, such as dishes, soup plates, and pans, whilst more improved patterns in one piece and of superior quality' had long since obtained preference amongst merchants and others."
- (6) "That deliveries of goods were required at various depôts without specifying what proportion at each ; that the cost of carriage could not be obtained ; and that thus the difference in freight between deliveries at Deptford and Devonport was, in 'some cases equal to a profit, whilst in others of very low value nearly equal to the first cost of the article itself.'"
- (7) "That the experience of contractors was that goods made from the same materials and of the same workmanship and from the same die had been rejected at one depôt and accepted at another."
- (8) "That 'during the late war' goods were passed, whilst goods of similar make and quality were, on the cessation of hostilities, subjected to unusual and unfair scrutiny and rejected, although in all respects strictly in accordance with the tenders."
- (9) "That goods of delicate workmanship in copper and brass, such as gasfittings, cocks, hinges, and fastenings, were required to be furnished at a price per pound weight, and the material being of less value than the workmanship, there was an

inducement to manufacturers to supply goods of unnecessary weight 'to the manifest loss of the Government.' "

- (10) "That instances had been given in which respectable manufacturers had, in consequence of these forms and conditions, been deterred from tendering direct, and had even refused to supply goods to middlemen if they were to be subject to the powers of Government inspection."

In view of these facts the Committee considered that the then existing system was open to many abuses and afforded "facilities for unscrupulous men to step in between the manufacturers and the Government" who would venture upon risks and practice means from which many tradesmen of reputation would shrink.

Before the close of the year a letter, founded upon this interesting report, was despatched to the Lords of the Treasury. A reply was received to the effect that copies of the report and of previous correspondence had been sent to the Lords' Commissioners of the Admiralty, and the Secretary of State for War, who had been requested to make "particular inquiry" into any of the allegations which might, *prima facie*, appear to be well founded with a view to the application of a remedy "on any point on which the existing practice may be found to be defective."

Thus, by virtue of their very persistence in what they deemed to be a good cause, the Council of the Chamber secured the greater part of what they demanded, viz. :—an official inquiry. How far the conditions referred to above differ from those which now prevail manufacturers and merchants will be able to judge from the account which has been given; but it may be stated with confidence that considerable reforms have been made partly, no doubt, as a result of the strenuous efforts made by the Chamber over half-a-century ago.

The Council were dissatisfied with the condition of telegraph service, and decided to memorialise the Government with regard to the great national importance of completing a telegraphic communication between this

Atlantic
Cables.

country and the Continent of America. They deeply regretted the failure which had lately taken place, and expressed the opinion that the Government should extend their aid to the enterprise "in the form of such a moderate guarantee on a fixed amount of new capital" as might be likely to ensure the completion of "so desirable and national" an object.

CHAPTER XXX.

1859.

Fraudulent Imitation of Trade Marks.

For over a year the Council had been investigating the question of the fraudulent imitation of the trade marks of British manufacturers by persons in foreign countries, to the very great injury of the trade of British subjects. As a result of their deliberations the Council presented a memorial to the Earl of Malmesbury, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stating that they were informed and had reason to believe that "this nefarious practice" had very much increased, and that the "well-established reputation for superiority of British manufactures" had been seriously damaged. The French Legislature had, by a law dated June 27th, 1857, entitled the "*Loi sur les Marques de fabrique et de Commerce*," established dépôts (offices) for the registration of trade marks, and imposed penalties for their fraudulent imitation, and had "expressly extended the benefit of this law to the inhabitants of such foreign countries as by Diplomatic convention establish a reciprocal protection for French marks." In consequence of this the Chamber in their memorial pointed out that whilst the laws of England afforded protection to foreign manufacturers from imitation or piracy in this country, it appeared to be necessary, in order to obtain for British subjects the benefit of the French law, that there should be "an actual convention between the two countries, and the Chamber therefore respectfully urged that his

Majesty's Government should take such steps as seemed to be expedient to obtain for British subjects by Diplomatic convention the protection of registration in France and likewise to secure to their manufacturers protection from fraudulent imitation in other countries." Mr. William Scholefield, M.P., subsequently reported that he had seen the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and also Mr. Henley, of the Board of Trade, who assured him that the Government were then endeavouring to procure, from their agents abroad, all the information they could get, with a view to enable them to make the needful corrections, and that though this process would necessarily occupy a "good deal of time" (to quote Mr. Scholefield's letter), their attention would be assiduously directed to attain the end sought for by the Chamber of Commerce.

The question of the country obtaining a protectorate over Sarawak was again considered, and a petition on the subject was presented to the House of Commons, in which it was stated that the Chamber had had "fully under review" the great advantages which had resulted, and might thereafter result to commerce and to civilization from the settlement at Sarawak on the North-Western coast of Borneo "now under the rule of Sir James Brooke." It was stated that these advantages would comprise the maritime command of the southern shore of the China Sea, the possession of an extensive and valuable coal field, the development of a country rich in tropical productions, the increase of British commerce and influence, the repression of the slave trade and piracy, and the advancement of civilization in the Eastern Archipelago." The Chamber regretted "the abandonment of a policy dictated by wisdom and foresight, and affirmed by national sanctions and encouragement, and viewed with apprehension, the consequences which "may hence ensue to the interests, position, and influence of Britain in the Southern Seas. The situation of Sarawak (then containing more than 300 British subjects) must, it was argued, "necessarily continue uncertain and precarious from the withdrawal of British recognition and protection," and the Chamber asserted that no "petty native state thus situated" could

The
Territory of
Sarawak.

long advance in civilization, and that "regard for the interests of Sarawak and the security of the British subjects" resident there "indicated the necessity of its being placed under the formal protection of Great Britain or some other powerful State." It was, therefore, urged in the petition that the protection of this country should be granted to Sarawak, and that such other measures might be taken as would, in the judgment of Parliament, tend to ensure the advantages referred to, and to preserve the peace and security of the Coasts of Borneo "consistently with international law, with the honour of this country and with the just rights of Sir James Brooke and the native population."

Railway Rates.

The Chamber were very early in evidence on the question of railway rates. Their attention was called in March, 1859, to a Bill then before the House of Commons having for its object the "increase of Tolls on the Great Western Railway." A committee, consisting of Messrs. J. B. Browett, G. A. Everitt, Chas. Sturge, Robert Fletcher, Geo. Downing, E. Peyton, Henry Van Wart, and R. Johnson, was appointed by the Council to take such steps as they might deem desirable for the purpose of "most effectually" opposing the further progress of the Bill. It was ordered that a petition to the House of Commons should be prepared; the Committee were empowered to nominate a deputation to the Board of Trade "and also to give evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons;" and the sum of £20 was voted to the fund then about to be raised to oppose the Bill. Messrs. Henry Van Wart, G. A. Everitt, Robt. Fletcher, T. Dixon, J. B. Browett, and J. D. Goodman, were appointed to give evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, and Mr. Richard Spooner, M.P., Mr. John Bright, M.P., Mr. C. N. Newdegate, M.P., Mr. Foster, M.P., Mr. Sheridan, M.P., and Mr. C. B. Adderley, M.P. (local members of Parliament), were requested to accompany the deputation to Lord Donoughmore (Board of Trade). In the petition presented to the House of Commons the Chamber stated:—

- (1) "That from the inland situation of Birmingham, the merchants, manufacturers, and other

inhabitants were greatly interested in having chief and unrestricted communication with other parts of the United Kingdom, and particularly with the seaports thereof."

- (2) "That the rates proposed by the Bill were unnecessarily large, and would interfere materially with many of the manufactures and trades carried on in Birmingham."
- (3) "That the power of making indefinite charges proposed by the Bill was highly objectionable in principle, and if exercised would occasion great inconvenience to and entail much injury upon many of the traders and inhabitants of the Town of Birmingham."
- (4) "That it was, therefore, highly important that the rates and charges should be retained at as low a scale as possible, and that the maximum rates authorised by Parliament should include all the charges payable by traders and others for using the Railway or for carrying or sending goods on or over the same, and for the collection, delivery, loading, unloading, or warehousing thereof, and for other services and duties connected in any way with such use or carriage."
- (5) "That the Chamber was only made acquainted with the provisions of the Bill at too late a period to enable them to petition to be heard before the Committee against the preamble and provisions thereof, and that they, therefore, trusted the Bill would not be allowed to pass into law as it stood, but that, if it should pass into law, such provisions and clauses might be introduced therein as might be necessary for the protection of merchants, manufacturers, and other traders."

Notwithstanding their anxiety and concern in the matter, it would seem that the Chamber was unable to present evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, although there was apparently no negligence on the part of the Council, whose attention was only called to the matter on March 4th, 1859, whilst the petition was approved on the 5th March and forwarded certainly within three or

four days of that particular date. The petition, combined with other opposition, was, however, successful, and the threatened impost was not authorised by Parliament.

The Bank-
ruptcy and
Insolvency
Laws.

A special meeting of the Council was held on March 14th, 1859, to consider the provisions of the Bankruptcy Bill. Mr. Van Wart and Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd were appointed deputies to represent the Chamber at a meeting of merchants and others to be held in London on the following Tuesday, in support of the Bill; letters were ordered to be addressed to the Members of Parliament for the district reminding them that Lord John Russell's Bill would come up on the following Wednesday for second reading; and a report prepared by Mr. Arthur Ryland on the deliberations of the Mercantile Legislation Committee was considered. Mr. Ryland reported that the Committee generally approved of the Bill, but desired to see certain alterations made in it, viz. :—

- (1) "That the London Insolvent Court in Portugal Street should be continued in order to dispose of all the small cases."
- (2) "That the amount of petitioning creditors should be as follows :—if one creditor, £50; or, if two, £60, or, if three or more, £75, instead of £20, £30, and £50 respectively as mentioned in the Bill."
- (3) "That the levying of an execution by seizure alone 'without sale' should be an Act of Bankruptcy."
- (4) "That the non-payment for six days after it is payable of a debt due on a Bill of Exchange or other instrument 'on a day certain' signed by the debtor, should be an Act of Bankruptcy, provided the creditor should summon the debtor before the Court within a month after it was payable, and the Court should be of opinion that the debtor had not a good defence and was not in 'good and solvent circumstances.'"
- (5) "That the summons should be founded upon an affidavit by the creditor—the onus of proof of solvency to be on the debtor and payment of the debt after the issue of the summons 'not to be a discharge of the Act.'"

- (6) "That the creditors should elect assignees, who should not be paid, but who should appoint one of the official assignees or other duly qualified person as the accountant to the estate 'who should be paid.'"
- (7) "That if a bankrupt committed any act amounting to a misdemeanour, he should be proceeded against by indictment and not punished 'by refusal of certificate.'"
- (8) "That every certificate should be endorsed with statements signed by the Court showing under certain specific heads the date of commencement of business, date of bankruptcy, amount of assets and of debts, keeping of books, stock-taking, and such like, according to a form to be set out in the schedule to the Bill."
- (9) "That 'Horse Racing and other gambling' should be included among the offences."
- (10) "That in regard to private arrangements there should be a majority in number and of four-fifths in value."

At a special meeting of the Council held on the 11th May, 1859, a memorial signed by thirty firms of Birmingham manufacturers of metal goods was received, urging that steps be taken to obtain a modification of the Law of Copyright. The memorialists pointed out that their goods were chiefly of an ornamental character in which the art of design formed a prominent feature, and urged that steps should be taken to obtain an alteration in Class I. (articles composed wholly or chiefly of metal) similar to that made in Class X. (printed fabrics) in the previous session of Parliament. Among the thirty signatures to the memorial were Elkington, Mason and Co., John Hardman and Co., Peyton and Peyton, James Cartland and Sons, F. and C. Osler, James Collins, and T. and J. Bragg. The amendment desired in the law as contained in the Copyright of Designs Act included an extension of the period of protection with the right of renewal and a reduction of the fees. A deputation, consisting of Mr. Van Wart, with Mr. Frederick Elkington and Mr. Edward Peyton, joined a delegation from Sheffield

on the 20th July, 1859, and were introduced by Mr. Roebuck, M.P. and Mr. Richard Spooner, M.P. to Lord John Russell and Mr. Milner Gibson, of the Board of Trade, who stated that if a full statement of what was required was sent to them it should receive careful consideration.

Combined
Action—
Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce.

Towards the end of 1859 a letter was read from the President of the Hull Chamber, conveying resolutions passed at a meeting of delegates from the Chambers of Commerce at Bradford suggesting that delegates from Chambers of Commerce in the three kingdoms should meet annually to discuss questions bearing immediately on subjects within their peculiar province, and that such meeting should be held at the time and place of the Annual Meeting of the National Association for the promotion of Social Science on the 1st November, and that in cases of pressing importance special meetings should be summoned for London or elsewhere. The Association referred to, it will be recollected, is the body with which the Birmingham and other Chambers of Commerce were co-operating in regard to the Bankruptcy Bill, but it is believed that it was also then dealing with other subjects affecting the commercial community. The Council, therefore, resolved that in their opinion it was desirable that members (delegates) of the various Chambers of Commerce should continue to attend the meetings of the National Association, but that the proposed Annual Congress of Delegates from Chambers of Commerce for the purpose of mutual co-operation should be held in London during the first week of the meeting in Parliament. It is clear, therefore, that the Chamber was anxious that, with other similar bodies in various parts of the country, it should do everything that was possible to promote combined action in the interests of the mercantile and manufacturing community, and it is a reasonable assumption that this anxiety and willingness to co-operate, was the forerunner of the formation of the Association of Chambers of Commerce a year later. No time was lost in arranging a preliminary meeting, which was held in London on the 22nd November, 1859, when it was decided to hold the first Congress during the first week of the then ensuing session of Parliament, and a Committee was

appointed to make the necessary arrangements. It was also decided that each Chamber should be at liberty to appoint as many delegates as they might see fit, but that the delegates of each Chamber, whether one or more, should have two votes on each question.

CHAPTER XXXI.

1860.

The year 1860 is noteworthy because it witnessed the formation of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, of which the first Hon. Secretary was Mr. Arthur Ryland (Mayor of Birmingham and a member of the Council of the Birmingham Chamber), and the first Committee:—Mr. C. M. Norwood (Hull), (Chairman), Mr. J. F. Danson (Liverpool), Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd (Birmingham), Mr. H. W. Ripley (Bradford), and Mr. J. Jobson Smith (Sheffield). Apparently the formation of the Association was approved by the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, which, at a meeting held in Bradford in October, 1859, and attended by representatives of several Chambers of Commerce, including Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Edinburgh, Hull, Leeds, and Leith, passed a resolution to the effect that it was desirable “for the purpose of mutual co-operation and assistance that delegates from the Chambers of Commerce in the three kingdoms should meet annually to discuss questions bearing immediately on subjects within their particular province.”

No time was lost in bringing the matter to a head, for, on the 1st and 2nd February, 1860, the first Congress took place in London, when there were present representatives from Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Glasgow, Gloucester, Hull, Kendal, Leeds, Liverpool, Norwich, Sheffield, Southampton, The Staffordshire Potteries, Wolverhampton, and Worcester, whilst the

Chambers of Commerce of Coventry and Dundee wrote expressing their approval of the objects of the meeting, and, as evidence of their approval, joined the Association in the first year of its existence. Birmingham's representatives were Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd and Arthur Ryland.

At this meeting it was decided, that an Association of Chambers of Commerce was desirable, and regulations were adopted and a London agent appointed. Practical action was at once taken when the Chambers of Commerce of Birmingham, Sheffield, and Wolverhampton undertook to prepare draft bills for the following purposes, viz. :— (1) To amend the law relating to the counterfeiting or fraudulent use or appropriation of trade marks, and to secure to the proprietors of trade marks in certain cases the benefit of international protection ; (2) To provide for the supervision of Marine Store Dealers or dealers in old or partly manufactured metals ; and (3) to amend the Copyright of Designs Act so far as it related to articles made wholly or partly of metal.

Scarcity of
Copper
Coinage.

At the end of 1859 there was a repetition of the scarcity of copper coins, and it was again decided to apply to the Treasury for a supply as on previous occasions. On the 14th January the Secretary of the Treasury replied stating that a supply of copper coins not exceeding £300 in value would be delivered at the Mint on application from the Birmingham Branch of the Bank of England under the usual regulations. Mr. Chippendale, whose description is not given in the records, but who was probably the manager of the Birmingham Branch of the Bank of England, informed the Council of the Chamber that the Bank would obtain the amount of copper coin desired from the Mint on the Chamber paying the expenses of conveyance, and it was thereupon resolved that the Chamber would guarantee the expenses of conveyance by luggage train and insurance, and would confer with Mr. Chippendale as to the "mode of distribution."

Railway
Combination

The attention of the Council was called in 1860 to two Bills then before the House of Commons having for their object the "empowering of certain railway companies to enter into contracts for the working of

their lines," and a memorial was presented to the Board of Trade praying that they might withhold their sanction to the Bills "upon the ground that a great monopoly would be thereby created to the great prejudice of trade and the public generally." In view of what has taken place during the succeeding half-century in the nature of railway combination and other arrangements tending towards the creation of a monopoly, this information is interesting as showing that the Chamber was alert and watchful, and anxious to serve the commercial community to the utmost of their power. Subsequently an interview took place with the President of the Board of Trade, who said that he adopted to some extent the views of the Chamber, which would be reported by the Board to the Committee on the Bill.

At a special meeting of the Chamber held on the 14th February, 1860, it was resolved that the Chamber cordially approved of the "system of commercial policy" and "the principles of financial arrangement" proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the measures (then) recently introduced by him into the House of Commons. At the same time, however, the Chamber expressed its disappointment that the Government should have proposed to continue the most objectionable mode of assessing the property and income tax, which made no distinction between incomes derived "from precarious sources and from realised property." Upon the latter question a memorial was addressed to the Rt. Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, M.P., the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which it was stated that whilst the Chamber recognised the necessity and the advantage of a just system of direct taxation, they respectfully urged the justice of assessing income tax at a different rate on incomes derived from precarious sources and on terminable and life annuities from that levied on realised property. Many years elapsed before such a distinction was made, but the fact that it was ultimately made, notwithstanding the actual and apparent hardships created and the new anomalies introduced with reference to "earned" and "unearned" income, shows that even half-a-century ago the Chamber was anticipating events. The memorial was placed in the

Chancellor
of the
Exchequer's
Proposals.

Income Tax

hands of Mr. Scholefield for presentation, and Mr. John Bright was "requested to support its prayer."

Stamp Duty
on Contract
Notes.

One of the resolutions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to which reference has been made, was that a stamp duty of 1d. be imposed on all contract notes, and in regard to this the Council directed that a letter should be addressed to the members of Parliament for the borough stating that an apprehension existed in the minds of many members of the Chamber that such duty "may apply to orders for goods," although this might not be the intention of the Chancellor. The local members of Parliament were therefore requested to obtain a distinct statement from Mr. Gladstone on the subject, and ask him to introduce such an amendment of the resolution as would preclude such a construction.

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

On the 29th February, 1860, an important letter on the subject of Trade Marks was sent to the Board of Trade, in which compulsory registration was advocated. It was stated that the chief object of establishing a compulsory registry would be to provide evidence of title at once indisputable, simple, and inexpensive. At that time in any proceeding by a party complaining of "a piracy of a trade mark," whether in reference to a motion for injunction, an action for damages, or "an indictment for a cheat," it was necessary in the first instance to prove that the complainant was entitled to the "mark pirated" by showing a long continued and exclusive use of it, and this proof had to be furnished by affidavit or by witness, whereas "if a registry were established the only evidence would be the certificate of the Registrar. It was not suggested that the Registry should apply to names, but that it should be confined to devices which were used very extensively for denoting the manufacturers or the works "where or by whom the articles bearing them were made." The Chamber expressed the view that registration should certainly be compulsory "or parties might unwittingly incur the penalties of piracy." A manufacturer claiming the exclusive use of a mark could not, it was said, with reason object to incur the trouble and expense of registry, whilst, on the other hand, it was "but just to other manufacturers that they should have

the means of ascertaining what marks were protected," or, in other words, "that they should be warned from the use of such marks."

The Chamber then proceeded to suggest the heads of a Bill, which included the following :—(1) That the Registrar of Trade Marks should be the Registrar of Designs constituted by 5 and 6 Vic., c. 100, sec. 16 ; (2) That his duty should be to receive applications for registration, to give notice of the same in the Gazette, and to register the mark unless caveats were received against such registration, when he should refer them and the application to the County Court of the District, where the applicant carried on business ; (3) That certificates of registration should be evidence of the claimants' title to the use of the mark ; (4) That the Register should be open to inspection on the payment of a fee ; (5) That within two years from the passing of the Act no party should be entitled to the exclusive use of an unregistered mark, and (6) That the system of caveats should cease after the expiration of two years from the passing of the Act, and that thenceforth the only question should be whether the mark was already on the register. Other suggestions were made as to the machinery of the proposed Bill, and the whole were duly transmitted to the Board of Trade.

A special meeting of the Council was held on the 10th March, 1860, to decide upon proceeding or otherwise with the petitions which had been presented against the Railway Amalgamation Bills, to which reference has already been made. It appears that the Parliamentary Agent of the Chamber had appeared in support of the Chamber's petitions and that Railway Companies' counsel had not taken any objection to the *locus standi* of the Chamber, which, it is significantly reported, "was contrary to expectation." Whilst, on the one hand, this lack of objection afforded eloquent testimony to the status of the Chamber, it was, apparently, not quite what the Chamber desired, for in the report presented to the Council it is said that "it was thought that a Chamber of Commerce could not be heard, and that the refusal would improve our position for opposing the Bills in the House on the third reading." The report to the Council then stated that to

Railway
Combination

continue to appear against the Bills would involve an expense of £6 each day for House fees and an additional £4 per day for agents' fees, and that the chairman had, therefore, withdrawn appearance on one of the Bills and had convened the special meeting of the Council to decide whether or not the "appearance on the other Bills should be continued." It was added that the Liverpool and Leeds Chambers had declined to contribute to the cost of the opposition, and a letter was submitted from Mr. Scholefield, M.P., recommending a vigorous opposition on the third reading, in the course of which he mentioned that the Earl of Warwick (the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee) had stated to him that the points mentioned in the Chamber's petition would not be overlooked by the Committee. In view of this letter and of the whole of the circumstances of the case, the Council decided that as to proceed with their opposition in Committee would involve greater expense than they would feel justified in incurring, they would content themselves with opposing the Bills on the third reading.

Bonded
Warehouses.

For some the question of the extension to large inland towns of the system of bonded warehouses had been under consideration, and early in 1860, upon a report from a special committee, a petition was presented to the House of Commons. The Council, in adopting the report, affirmed that they had learned of the proposal with much satisfaction as its adoption would afford "greatly increased facilities" to the internal commerce of the country, and place traders in articles subject to Customs' regulations who were established in towns having no bonded warehouses "on an equal footing with those in towns that have the privilege." The Council also stated that the extension of the system referred to would, if applied to Birmingham, tend to promote its prosperity and importance as the centre of an important commercial district, and that it would confer advantages upon traders in neighbouring towns by affording them an opportunity of "supplying themselves" with greater facility than they possibly could from markets at a greater distance. Whilst admitting the advantages which would accrue from the extension of the bonded warehouse system referred to, the Council

“observed with considerable anxiety” the proposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer relative to charges to be imposed on goods removed from one bonded warehouse to another, and expressed the hope that Mr. Gladstone would realise “the great injury it would inflict” on inland towns by continuing to London, Liverpool, and other large seaport towns the monopoly which the extension of the system of bonded warehouses was intended to vary.

Whilst expressing these views the Council also took into consideration the objections raised by several of the mercantile and manufacturing houses (members of the Chamber), who stated that it would not be prudent to give greater facilities “for the introduction of the hardware manufactures of the various Continental States that come into direct competition with those of Birmingham. To these objections they replied that whatever weight they might have had they were “entirely done away with” by the financial measures of the Chancellor, in which he abolished “absolutely all duties upon the import of manufactured goods,” which would not, therefore, be affected by the extension of the bonded warehouse system.

The Council, then, in adopting the report of the Special Committee, expressed their opinion that it was highly desirable that the privilege of bonded warehouses should be obtained because it was a matter of convenience to the trade connected with exciseable articles, and would afford increased facilities of supply to the numerous shop-keepers and dealers in neighbouring towns and tend to increase the importance of Birmingham by developing its trade and making it the centre of a “wide circle of new and large commercial operations.” During the session of 1860 a law was passed which had the effect of extending the system of bonded warehouses to Birmingham.

On the 24th March, 1860, a letter was received from the office of the Privy Council for Trade (now Board of Trade) stating that with a view to negotiations which were in progress with the French Government for the purpose of arranging the details of a proposed new “French Tariff of Import Duties upon the articles the produce

Foreign
Competition
and Bonded
Warehouses.

French Tariff
and the
Anglo-
French
Treaty.

and manufacture of the United Kingdom," which were enumerated in the Anglo-French Treaty of the 23rd January, 1860, they were desirous of obtaining any information which the Chamber might be able to supply in connection with the branches of the British export trade in which the Chamber was more especially interested. The Board of Trade stated that there were three questions in regard to which they more especially desired accurate and detailed statements, viz.:—(1) as to the classification it would be desirable to adopt in regard to Birmingham manufactures with a view to the assessment of specific duties *by weight* in the French tariff; (2) As to the average price of each class of such manufactures; and (3) Upon what descriptions of each class of goods it was more especially important that the duties should be reduced below the maximum of 30% *ad valorem*, whether such duties be charged *ad valorem* or the *ad valorem* rate be taken as a basis on which to assess specific duties, and upon what special grounds such reductions are important. Continuing their letter the Board of Trade stated that the third article of the Anglo-French Treaty referred to provided that the average price of the British articles enumerated therein "during the six months last preceding its signature" should be taken as a basis for the import duty, and that they would, therefore, like to be furnished with a statement of the prices prevailing during the period mentioned. In concluding, they stated, with reference to a desire which had been expressed in certain quarters, that deputations should be sent to Paris on the subject of the Treaty, that they would suggest the possibility and desirability of a delegate being selected from each branch of the industries with which the Chamber was connected "to represent the common interest of such particular branch and to proceed, if it be necessary, to Paris to supply any information on the spot" which might be required in the "negotiation of the French Tariff."

At a subsequent meeting a number of members of the Council promised to send information as to the rate of duty and mode of classifying articles, and the secretary was instructed to ask about twenty other firms for particulars concerning their special trade. Shortly afterwards

Mr. G. A. Everitt and Mr. C. H. Wagner, accompanied by Mr. Scholefield, M.P., and Mr. W. O. Foster, M.P., had an interview with the President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Cobden, M.P., on the subject of the Treaty, when the latter fully explained the objects and intentions of the Government, from which it appeared that the French Government was desirous of a large importation of English goods. Commissioners from the Board of Trade then visited Birmingham, and were received by the Chamber, who explained to them "the impossibility of giving them the [full] information required as to specific duties," but ultimately decided to do so as far as practicable. The Commissioners were then "taken to several manufacturers, who, it was found out, could supply the information required by the Board of Trade." According to the report of a Sub-Committee they were, at the time of reporting, engaged in preparing information which would "enable them to convert as far as practicable *ad valorem* into specific duties." The Council appointed Mr. C. H. Wagner and Mr. Robert Fletcher as the deputation to Paris on the subject.

On May 1st the Board of Trade again wrote to the Chamber asking for the desired particulars and information; stating that these were "equally necessary whatever decision might be arrived at as to the mode of assessing the duty (*i.e.*) whether the duties be *ad valorem* or specific," and that not less than a week's notice would be given as to the time when the deputation should proceed to Paris "to afford assistance to the [British] Commissioners." The Chamber replied that the information was not yet complete, and that as each day brought some additions they desired to delay it as late as possible.

On the 21st June, 1860, Mr. C. H. Wagner and Mr. Robert Fletcher presented a "very able report" on their proceedings in Paris, which was ordered to be printed and circulated, but a copy of which is unfortunately not available in the archives of the Chamber nor, so far as can be ascertained, elsewhere. Clearly the matter was not concluded, as the two members of the deputation were asked to continue their services until the question was settled. In November, 1860, they were sincerely thanked

by the Council "for the time they had devoted and the labour they had undergone" in connection with the Commercial Treaty with France, and for "the very able and successful manner in which they had advocated the interests of the district and executed the commission entrusted to them by the Council." At a subsequent general meeting of the Chamber the following resolution was passed unanimously :—

"That the cordial thanks of this Chamber be presented to Richard Cobden, Esq., M.P., for his invaluable and successful services in connection with the recent treaty with France, services not more distinguished by eminent talent and zealous and unremitting labour than they were by disinterested patriotism."

In a written apology explaining his inability to be present at the meeting, Mr. Wm. Scholefield, M.P., said :—

"The proposed vote of thanks to Mr. Cobden is a matter in which I would not willingly have shown even an appearance of neglect by my absence if I could by any means have been present. The full value of Mr. Cobden's eminent services in reference to the French Treaty is even now too little known and far too slightly acknowledged. Whether considered commercially, or in its political consequences, that Treaty will be an enduring evidence of disinterested patriotism which posterity will admit without that leaven of doubt which has too frequently characterised contemporary comments."

Bankruptcy
and Insol-
vency Bill.

In the year 1860 another Bill was introduced to repeal the existing laws relating to bankruptcy and insolvency and to enact in their place such provisions as would relieve the estates of bankrupt and insolvent debtors from expenses then charged on them and give to creditors more control in the administration of such estates and a freer action and more power in private arrangements with their debtors, and also render more certain the punishment of fraudulent debtors. The Chamber, continuing their active interest in the matter, petitioned in favour of the general principle of this Bill, and, at a subsequent meeting, Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd reported in detail upon its provisions, when a number of

suggestions for amendment were decided upon, most of which have since been incorporated in legislation. One of the most interesting suggestions which has not yet been—but which may shortly be—legislated upon is the following :—“ That loss by gambling, in time bargains, or otherwise in the twelve months prior to adjudication should be classed among the offences.”

A letter was received from the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce asking for further explanations of the proposed Bill to amend the law of copyright of designs, and the Secretary was instructed to inform the Sheffield Chamber that the Bill must be prepared without further delay ; that the cost would not, in the first instance, exceed £10, and that the Council would rely on Sheffield's co-operation both as regarded expense and influence. It was then ordered that a Bill be prepared for extending the copyright period from 3 to 6 years ; for obtaining a simpler mode of marking each registered article ; and for the repeal of so much of Sec. 17 of the Designs Act, 1852, as prohibited the inspection of registered designs previous to the expiration of the copyright period. At the same meeting it was also decided to urge the Lords of Treasury to reduce the fee of £3 then charged on articles made of metal to £1, and the fee of £5 then charged for registration also to £1. It appears that the fees on metal articles were sixty times those charged on textile fabrics ; six times those on paper hangings ; and three times those on glass, earthenware, china, wood, and ivory. The fee of £3 was subsequently reduced as desired.

Law of
Copyright of
Designs.

The Chamber continued active in their efforts to secure legislation for the better supervision of Marine Store Dealers, and, after correspondence with Mr. Scholefield, M.P., decided to prepare a Draft Bill. On the 5th June the draft was submitted to and approved by the Council. It was afterwards introduced into the House of Commons by the President, Mr. R. Spooner, but, unfortunately, after being read a second time and referred to Committee, it had to be withdrawn, apparently, because of the fact that it was a private member's Bill, and as there was no likelihood of the Committee stage being reached, Mr. Spooner recommended an influential deputation to the

Marine Store
Dealers.

Home Secretary to urge upon the Government the necessity for immediate legislation, with the view of rendering more difficult the sale of stolen metals. Owing to the unsuitability of the summer season it was found impossible to organise a deputation, but a Sub-Committee was appointed to make arrangements for the re-introduction of the Bill early in the following session. On November 30th, 1860, a conference took place with the Chambers of Sheffield and Wolverhampton, and a deputation was appointed to wait upon the Home Secretary at an early date.

CHAPTER XXXII.

1861.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the first Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on February 6th and 7th, 1861, Birmingham was represented by Messrs. Arthur Ryland, Sampson S. Lloyd, G. A. Everitt, and John S. Wright, who took a prominent part in discussions relating to resolutions passed on the subjects of Bankruptcy and Insolvency Law, the Registration of Trade Marks, Limited Partnerships, and the Regulation of Marine Store Dealers. The meeting also approved of the suggestion of the Birmingham Chamber for the amendment of the Copyright of Designs Act, and, on the motion of Mr. G. A. Everitt, it was resolved that petitions be presented by the various Chambers to the House of Commons urging the Government

“to grant the various Chambers of Commerce the reports of the British Consuls throughout the world, or such portions thereof as may tend to promote the development of British commerce.”

At the close of the meetings a deputation on which the four Birmingham delegates served waited upon the President of the Board of Trade, to urge upon him the necessity for legislation on the subject of Piracy of Trade

Marks and the amendment of the Copyright of Designs Act. The deputation, which consisted of 20 delegates, accompanied by 13 members of Parliament, was organised by the Birmingham Chamber.

Soon after the deputation just referred to, a Bill Trade Marks. dealing with the question of trade marks was introduced into the House of Lords by the Lord Chancellor, and Mr. J. S. Wright and Mr. J. B. Browett were appointed as a Sub-Committee to consider it and report. In their report the Sub-Committee stated that whilst the Bill was good, so far as it went, it was necessary, in order to make it thoroughly efficient, to make provision for the establishment of a system of registration, and the chairman was instructed to write to the President (Mr. Spooner) requesting him to obtain an interview with the Lord Chancellor on the subject. The Lord Chancellor, having declined to adopt the suggestion, a petition, embodying appropriate clauses, was drafted and forwarded to Lord Chelmsford for presentation. Subsequently the President laid before the Council clauses for establishing a Registry of Trade Marks, through the instrumentality of the County Courts, but the Council expressed the view that the Registrar under the Copyright of Designs Act would be more acceptable than the Registrar of the County Court. Unfortunately the minutes for this year are in a very rough and imperfect condition, and it is, therefore, quite impossible to give a full account of the valuable and energetic work which was undoubtedly done.

In February, 1861, the Council received a request Law of
Copyright of
Designs. from the Board of Trade for a copy of the Bill prepared under their direction for amending the law relating to the Copyright of Designs. The request was complied with, and a memorial on the subject was also prepared and forwarded to the President. A deputation from Birmingham and Sheffield subsequently waited upon Sir Emmerson Tennant (the Secretary of the Board of Trade) and Chief Registrar of Designs, and at a further meeting Messrs. Elkington, E. Peyton, Cartland, Phelps, Messenger, and Wingfield were requested to give information with regard to the matter so far as it affected their respective trades.

Marine Store
Dealers.

A deputation from the Birmingham and other Chambers, which was accompanied by Mr. Kynnersley, the Stipendiary Magistrate of Birmingham, waited upon the Under-Secretary of State ("in the absence of the Secretary, who was in attendance upon Her Majesty"), and Mr. Geo. Dixon, the Vice-President, in reporting upon the matter, said that from the information he had received he had reason to believe that a Bill for the better regulation of Marine Store Dealers would be introduced by the Government. This does not appear to have been done, as Mr. Ryland reported at another meeting that he and Mr. Kynnersley had had a conference with the Under-Secretary of State, and that it was most desirable a Bill should be forthwith prepared and introduced into the House of Commons with provisions similar to those in the Bill of the previous session. This was done, and the Bill was placed in charge of Mr. Spooner, M.P., and Mr. Scholefield, M.P. An analysis was sent to each Chamber of Commerce coupled with a request that they would urge upon their members in the House of Commons the desirability of giving it their support. The Bill was passed into law, and the Association of Chambers of Commerce in their annual report said that much credit was due to the skill and tact displayed by the Chamber in preparing for legislation a very difficult and delicate question involving the right of supervision which had to be obtained in such a manner as to avoid the objection which arose from the feeling that honest traders would be placed in the same position as disreputable ones.

Bankruptcy
Bill.

The Government Bankruptcy Bill was carefully considered, and a number of amendments were prepared and submitted to Mr. Scholefield, M.P., and Mr. Murray, M.P., for submission to the Attorney-General. On the 26th February, 1861, at a meeting of the Council, Mr. Arthur Ryland said the Attorney-General appeared determined to allow of no amendment, and that, as the Bill would come on that evening, a deputation should at once proceed to London "to canvass members in the lobby" for their support. Mr. Ryland and Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd were appointed as the deputation, and being joined by Mr. J. B. Browett, set off immediately to London to prosecute

their task. They succeeded, however, only in getting one of the amendments accepted, but, at any rate, their want of success was not due to any lack of effort on their or the Chamber's part.

At the Council Meeting held on the 6th March, 1861, a letter was read from the Board of Trade presenting to the Chamber four volumes of the evidence taken by the *Conseil Supérieur du Commerce* of France in the course of the investigation held on the occasion of the earlier negotiations in connection with the French Treaty, and also conveying

Anglo-French
Treaty.

“ the thanks of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade for the important services rendered by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to the Governments of the two countries on this occasion, both in collecting the requisite information and in sending deputations to Paris to communicate with the *Conseil Supérieur du Commerce* and with the British Commissioners.”

Notwithstanding the success of their efforts in this matter the Council continued to be alert and watchful. Early in the year it was reported by Mr. G. A. Everitt that negotiations were on foot between the German Zollverein and France and between Belgium and France for Treaties of Commerce similar to that concluded between England and France. It was decided to memorialise the Board of Trade “ praying that steps should be taken to secure to this country any advantages given by such new treaties,” and a copy of the memorial was sent to all other Chambers of Commerce urging them to support it.

A communication was received from the Board of Trade requesting information “ upon the operation of the Tariff of Customs Duties now in force in the States forming the Customs Union of Germany (Zollverein); ” and a Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. C. H. Wagner, Mr. H. Weiss, and Mr. J. B. Browett, was thereupon appointed to adopt such means as they might consider desirable for obtaining the information.

German
Customs
Tariff.

The Chamber also received a request from the Board of Trade for suggestions “ for an alteration in the mode of classifying the export of goods ” from the Midland

Trade
Returns.

District, and Messrs. Geo. Dixon, Henry Richards, C. H. Wagner, Geo. Wood, and J. S. Wright were appointed as a Sub-Committee to report upon the matter.

Birmingham
Exchange.

It is interesting to record that in this year Mr. Lander inquired whether the Council could afford the accommodation of a room for the Committee of the proposed Exchange, and that the Council replied that negotiations were then in progress for renting the Waterloo Rooms, which, if successful, would enable them to offer the large room on the ground floor if they could take it for not less than $2\frac{1}{2}$ years at a rent not exceeding £100 per annum. Subsequently it was reported that the Waterloo Rooms "would be required for the purposes of the Bankruptcy Court, and were not, therefore, available either for the Chamber of Commerce or the proposed new Exchange."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

1862.

Mr. Joseph
Chamberlain

One of the most interesting incidents that occurred in 1862 was the election of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain to a seat on the Council. Mr. Chamberlain not only attended meetings of the Council in that and subsequent years, but also served on a Sub-Committee appointed to consider the question of the Patent Laws and other Sub-Committees, and it cannot be doubted that he rendered invaluable services to the Chamber and the commercial community.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on the 19th February, 1862, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd and George Dixon. So far as Birmingham is concerned the meeting was a noteworthy one, seeing that Mr. Lloyd was appointed chairman. For nearly twenty years afterwards he filled the office with dignity and with power, and by dint of strenuous effort and innumerable journeys to all

parts of the Country he greatly increased the number of Chambers and thus helped to raise the Association in status and in influence.

The Council informed the Board of Trade that they had prepared the information desired with respect to the German Customs Tariff, and suggested that it should be laid before them by means of a deputation. This suggestion was adopted, and Mr. C. H. Wagner subsequently submitted the deputation's report of their conference, when it was decided to inform the Board of Trade that in the event of Mr. Mallet (the British representative) requiring the assistance of the Chamber, the Vice-President (Mr. George Dixon) and Mr. Wagner would proceed to Berlin and place their services at his disposal.

Proposals for the revision of the Italian Customs Tariff were carefully considered by a Sub-Committee, and independently Mr. Wagner had submitted to the Board of Trade a statement of Birmingham articles with the values affixed thereto. The Sub-Committee found it was essential that they should have this statement before them, not merely because it would facilitate their operation but also because otherwise the values affixed by them might be inconsistent with those assigned by Mr. Wagner. This gentleman was therefore requested to furnish a copy to the Sub-Committee, and shortly afterwards the Chamber received the thanks of the Board of Trade for their report.

Tariff matters continued to form an important part of the Chamber's work during this year, and in August, 1862, Messrs. C. H. Wagner, Henry Weiss, Henry Richards, and Joseph Chamberlain were appointed a Sub-Committee to inquire and report what alterations might be made in the existing tariff and commercial legislation of Austria. Unfortunately the signed records of the Chamber for this period are not available, even if they are in existence, and the information given in the chapter has, consequently, had to be abstracted from a rough minute book which is, in many ways, imperfect. The Sub-Committee's report on the Austrian Tariff is, however, apparently given in full. It is a most interesting document, and contains valuable information concerning the principal manufactures of the district, the average value of the articles in

England, the then existing rate of duty levied upon them in Austria, and the percentage which such duty bore to the cost-price of the articles in this country. The report went on to state that it would be difficult to say what rates of duties "might call into existence a lively trade between Austria and this country," as previously the export of Birmingham wares to Austria had been on the smallest scale. It was then pointed out that if a few figures were examined it would be "plainly perceptible" that no considerable trade could be maintained between the two countries under the then existing tariff. Instances were then given showing that wagon axles were assessed at a rate equal to 63% *ad valorem*, axes 53%, and bellows 89%, whilst on the other hand the duty on awls was equal to 12%, on joiners' braces and bits to 14%, and on boxwood rules to 5%. A very great anomaly was also to be found in the difference of duties levied on articles made of iron and those on similar articles made of brass—"a feature which, until lately, characterised nearly all Continental tariffs." Several striking examples were enumerated including:—Butt hinges—iron, 57%; brass, 17%. Buckles—iron, 90%; brass, 19%. Bedsteads—iron, 95%; brass, 22%. Indeed, there seemed to be no duty on iron goods "under about 9s. 6d. per cwt. in the Austrian Tariff whilst the prevailing French Tariff commenced at 1s. 5d. per cwt." So defective was the classification of the former that the duty on an iron chisel was equal to about 106%, whilst that upon a polished cast-steel chisel was 25%. Continuing, the Sub-Committee said:—"We cannot for one moment suppose that the Austrian Customs authorities intended, or do now intend, to levy a duty on cast-iron waterpipes equal to 190% on their present value and on needles a duty of 146%, while on the other hand fine buttons pay only 8%, ivory manufactures 4%, and mother o' pearl goods 3%." They added:—

"Cast-iron water-pipes, being an article too bulky for the smuggler, become simply a dead letter, while . . . the duty of nearly 150% on needles can only serve as a guide for the smuggler to show him what article it will pay him best to take in hand."

The Sub-Committee believed that the "gross contradictions" pointed out all had their origin in one and the same cause, viz. :—"that the tariffs when once framed remain stationary for too long a period," while industry, in its rapid progress, changed the article "almost everyday," and, in many cases, by means of improved methods of manufacture, the prime cost of the article was altered so materially as to make tariffs of some years standing almost incomprehensible. Although the tariff had remained stationary—on a specific or weight basis—the cost of many articles was only one-half of what it had been twenty years before. The report continues :—

"Yet, either the duty upon an article must have been fixed too low some twenty years ago (and we think no one would, for a moment, bring such an accusation against the Continental authorities) or the duty maintained on an article whose present is but half its former value must now be too high."

The parenthetical comment of the Sub-Committee is well worth preserving. It only remains to be added that the report was duly forwarded to the Board of Trade.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce Mr. George Dixon moved a resolution in favour of the extension of the principle of limited liability to partnerships. He said (*inter alia*) that there was always a large amount of capital seeking investment, and the owners were often obliged to invest it in Joint Stock Companies, whereas it might be better invested in trading partnerships if the liability were limited as in other countries. He pointed out that in all cases the liability of some partners would be unlimited. An interesting discussion ensued, the principal argument alleged against the proposal being that even under the law then existing a capitalist could lend money to a firm at any rate of interest and for any period that might be agreed upon by the parties. Replying, Mr. Dixon pointed out that if the proposal were adopted there would be full registered information as to the number of limited partners and the amounts held by them, so that parties dealing with them would be better informed than if capital were merely advanced on loan. Furthermore, he added, if the firm became insolvent money

Limited
Partnership.

loaned could be proved for as a debt, whereas this would not be the case in a limited partnership. On the proposal being put to the vote it was lost by a majority of one ; but the Council of the Chamber were not dismayed, and two months later appointed a Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. Arthur Ryland, Mr. H. Holliday, Mr. Samuel Booth, and Mr. Edward Peyton to prepare a Bill upon the subject. Evidently the Birmingham Chamber was in advance of the times, but the fact that a Limited Partnership Act was passed nearly fifty years afterwards—when, owing to the enormous extension of the Joint Stock principle, the need had been considerably minimised—proves that the Council were sound and far-sighted in their view.

Law of
Copyright of
Designs.

Mr. Dixon was more successful in his resolution proposed at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce with regard to the necessity for an amendment of the Copyright of Designs Act, which was carried. In this year the Chamber also had the satisfaction of recording that as a result of their efforts the Board of Trade had extended the copyright term for works in metal, and thanking them for the promptitude with which they had attended to the memorial presented by the Council.

Patent Laws

On the 7th May, 1862, Messrs. E. Peyton, Arthur Ryland, Caleb Lawden, and J. S. Wright were appointed as a Sub-Committee “to watch any action that may be taken in the House of Commons relative to the Patent Laws.” The Sub-Committee were instructed to communicate with every member of the Chamber, asking for information as to the working of the then existing Patent Law so as to enable the Council to lay before the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the subject what modifications, if any, were required by the manufacturers and inventors of the district. Before the close of the year the Sub-Committee reported that this communication had been made ; that application for information had also been addressed to Patent agents resident in Birmingham ; and that they had received from the Royal Commission a list of questions upon which evidence was desired, these questions being, with a few exceptions,

substantially identical with those issued by the Chamber. Mr. J. B. Browett and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain were added to the Committee.

As in other chapters, the matters mentioned do not Nota Bene. by any means represent the whole of the activities of the Chamber, for to do this would need a volume many times the size of this. It is also important to observe that it is practically impossible in most cases to indicate the result of action taken by the Chamber at any particular time. As an instance, the Chamber commenced their work on the question of Limited Partnerships in 1860, whereas the principles they advocated were not incorporated in legislation until the lapse of nearly half-a-century. Similarly with other important and interesting subjects to which the Council have at various times devoted their attention, results may not have followed for some time, but so far as is possible—having regard to the difficulties involved owing to changes in nomenclature and occasionally in circumstances—results will be indicated as they occur. It will be clear, however, to the interested reader, that in all their work the Council have always been actuated only by a desire to serve faithfully the interests of the community they represent, and that by so doing they have conferred incalculable benefits on the city and district.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

1863.

The delegates of the Chamber appointed to attend the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce in 1863 were Mr. George Dixon, Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, Mr. Arthur Ryland, Mr. J. S. Wright, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, who reported that the meeting was numerous attended (there being twelve Chambers present), and that the debates were "carried out with great spirit." The number of subjects brought forward, Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

they added, was, however, so great that it was impossible to do full justice to them all, and they, therefore, made several recommendations for reform, which included a provision that Chambers proposing subjects for discussion should provide reasons in favour of their views, and that these should be printed and sent to all the Chambers. It is significant that nearly fifty years afterwards the Council, without knowledge of this report, made a similar suggestion which still remains to be carried out.

Limited
Partnerships
and The
Law of
Partnership.

The Partnership Law Amendment Committee reported in favour of the additional clauses being inserted in the Bill introduced into Parliament by Mr. Scholefield under the title of the Partnership Law Amendment Bill, to include "provision giving clerks a share of profits without partnership rights or responsibilities," and for an "improved method of settling partnership disputes," and also a provision "that where a firm comprises partners with limited liability some words shall be added to the name of the firm, indicating that such is the case." The report was adopted by the Council on the 13th January, 1863, but on the 27th January they withdrew their approval of the proposed method of settling partnership disputes and of the suggestion to give an indication of a limited partnership. At the half-yearly meeting of the Chamber, held on the 29th January, Mr. George Dixon moved, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain seconded, a motion in favour of a clause being added to the Bill "enabling clerks, managers, etc., to receive a share of profits without thereby acquiring any of the rights and responsibilities of partners." This was carried, as was also a resolution instructing the Council to consider what clauses could be added to the Bill for facilitating the settlement of disputes. Subsequently, Mr. Scholefield was warmly thanked for the very valuable services he rendered to the Chamber in introducing the Bill and for the care and attention he devoted to it during its passage through the House of Commons. The Bill did not, however, owing to the late period of session, get beyond a first reading in the House of Lords, and at the Council meeting on October 29th, 1863, the Partnership Law Amendment Committee were

instructed to submit the Bill to a barrister prior to its re-introduction into Parliament in the next session. From this it is clear that the Chamber possessed that quality of dogged persistence which is so essential to ultimate success.

At the half-yearly meeting of the Chamber on January 29th, 1863, a report on the Patent Laws was adopted and ordered to be sent to the "Commissioners appointed by the Crown" to inquire into the working thereof, with an intimation that if desired to do so, the Council would be ready to "make a selection of manufacturers and others from this district to give evidence before them." The report contained the replies of the Chamber to the questionnaire issued by the Commissioners, and among other things it was stated that the Chamber were of opinion that it would not be desirable to appoint a Board or Tribunal by which preliminary investigations should be made prior to the granting of a patent, because they thought that it would be impossible for such a Board satisfactorily to deal with the large number of applications that would be annually brought before it. If, however, such a Board should be established, they were of opinion that it ought to be empowered "to decide only upon the novelty and not upon the importance of an invention." Continuing, the report stated that there was no reason to suppose that public inconvenience was caused by the multiplicity of patents; that patents ought not to be refused on the ground only of the trifling and frivolous nature of the inventions for which they were claimed; that greater facilities should be provided for the repeal of invalid patents; that provision should be made giving facilities for summary and inexpensive proceedings against infringers and providing a simple procedure for annulling patents; that the granting of licenses should not be made compulsory; that there was no objection to patents being granted to foreigners residing abroad, provided that "the article be made in England;" and that the patentee should not be entitled to retain his exclusive right to the invention if he did not "use the same." It is interesting to observe that this important report was signed by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and that in the last two suggestions

Patent Law
Amendment.

relating to compulsory working the Chamber was again nearly half-a-century in advance of the time when a Government Minister could be found who not only realised the value of compulsory working in the interests of the country, but determined to make—and succeeded in making—legislative provision in regard to it.

Italian
Tariff.

On the 10th February, 1863, Mr. Henry Weiss brought before the Council the “alleged reservation in the proposed Treaty of Commerce between France and Italy” of power to the Italian Government to increase the duties under the old to the level of those fixed in the new tariff. The Italian Tariff Committee of the Chamber were at once instructed to represent to the Government that all possible steps should be taken by them to prevent any increase in the then existing scale of duties. On the 16th March, the Committee reported that if the reservation were put into force “great injury would result to the trade of this district,” and that they had made strong representations to Her Majesty’s Government on the matter. In this representation, with the view of showing the precise manner in which the proposed increase of duty would affect the trade of Birmingham, a statement was given comparing the old and new duties on articles in which the district was concerned. On the 17th March the Foreign Secretary (Earl Russell) sent to the Chamber a copy of the convention then recently arranged between France and Italy, and asked for the observations of the Chamber thereupon “with reference to the negotiations into which Her Majesty’s Government are prepared to enter with the Government of Italy, with a view to the conclusion of similar arrangements between this country and Italy.” In reply to this statement the Chamber stated that the new duties to be levied under the Conventional Tariff were found on examination to be “about equal for the most part” to those then in force between England and Italy when the additions imposed by the Italian Government for War Tax, etc., were added to the latter. In some cases, however, the duties under the new tariff appeared to be reduced considerably below those then levied on British goods, and a hope was expressed that Her Majesty’s Government would obtain the same advan-

tages for the latter. It was also urged upon the Government that they should insist on the "Favoured Nation" clause as embodied in Article XXVI. of the Convention, being inserted in any Treaty of Commerce which may be negotiated and concluded between Italy and the United Kingdom "in order that this country may derive the benefit of any further concessions" which might thereafter be made by the Italian Government either to France or to any other country. Before the end of the year an Anglo-Italian Treaty was ratified, in which this country was placed on the footing of the most favoured nations.

A Bill was introduced into the House of Commons to prohibit the issue of writs for actions of debt in the Superior Courts for sums of less than £20. The Chamber petitioned against this Bill, alleging among other things (1) That in by far the larger proportion of cases of actions for debt the service alone of a writ of summons from the Superior Courts was effectual in obtaining a prompt settlement, especially in the case of dishonoured bills of exchange and cheques upon bankers; (2) That there being no system of "judgment by default" in the County Courts under £20 traders were put to great inconvenience, delay, and cost in procuring the attendance of the traveller who took the order and the porter or carrier who delivered the goods, whilst, after all, the debtor frequently admitted the debt without trial and obtained a long time for payment "by petty instalments;" and (3) That for many years the tendency of legislation had been in favour of the debtor rather than of the creditor, and that they could not agree with the preamble of the Bill that it was "desirable to protect debtors from being sued, etc.," on the ground that when a debtor had entered into a contract for payment for goods or money at a certain time and the price was regulated thereby—he should be obliged, as far as possible, to fulfil such engagement and in default be open to prompt legal proceedings.

Writs
Prohibition
Bill.

In this year the Council decided to petition the House of Commons in favour of a Bill which had been introduced to authorise the establishment of a "Metric Decimal" System of Weights and Measures.

Weights and
Measures.

Spanish
Customs
Tariff.

At the request of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council of Trade the Chamber considered the "Project of Law submitted by the Minister of Finance to the Spanish Courts," and expressed great satisfaction therewith, recognising that there was no doubt the Spanish Government "were sincerely desirous of making important reductions" in the duties which had previously been excessively high; and that the proposed reductions when carried out would be "in the direction of free trade." The Council added in their communication to the Government:—

"But it is also equally clear that the Finance Minister is proceeding very cautiously, if not timidly, in his course, and that he expects to meet with opposition from the interests which may be supposed to be injuriously affected by the proposed changes. It is, therefore, very important that the Spanish Government should receive as much encouragement and assistance as possible from all friendly quarters, and the Council of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce trust that Her Majesty's Government will lose no opportunity of doing all in their power to further this effort to remove the shackles of trade."

After approving of the proposal to revise the tariff valuations every two years (so as to provide for fluctuations in values) and urging that the Chamber of Commerce should be consulted in regard to such biennial revisions, the Council urged "the importance of including as large a number of articles as possible in the classes paying the lower scales of duties," so as to prevent the Customs' officials, through ignorance or the effect of improper influence, from defeating the intention of the Finance Minister, especially in regard to certain classes in which there were

"very many articles which have never been manufactured in Spain to an extent worthy of consideration . . . and which are consequently not entitled to be protected by the higher duties leviable under Class IV., and yet which are very likely to be placed there on the exaggerated representation of a small number of interested persons."

It was then stated that the duty of 30% to 50% proposed to be retained on "cotton and iron goods" competing with those of home manufacture was so high as to call for special remark.

"It must be evident to all those who have any experience in such matters not only that branches of industry requiring such high protective duties have no legitimate claim upon the fostering care of the Government, but also that it is impossible to collect the full amount of the duties imposed. The attempt to do so tends invariably and inevitably to the demoralising evils of smuggling."

CHAPTER XXXV.

1864.

The delegates of the Chamber who attended the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce in London on the 26th February, 1864, were Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Geo. Dixon, J. S. Wright, Alfred Field, and E. Peyton, and at this meeting Mr. George Dixon was appointed as one of the Hon. Secretaries of the Association. In reporting as to the proceedings at the meeting, the deputation expressed their "great gratification at the unanimous election for the fifth time of their esteemed colleague, Mr. S. S. Lloyd, to the Presidency of the Association," and stated that it would be equally pleasing to the Council to know that a member of their body had "by his knowledge of business, his skill as chairman, and his urbane and courteous bearing obtained this mark of respect from the leading representatives of trade in the most important towns of the kingdom."

The Council suffered a serious loss this year by the resignation of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, whose important public work and many engagements made it impossible

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr.
Chamberlain

for him to continue to attend the meetings. In accepting the resignation the Council expressed their sense of the loss of Mr. Chamberlain's "valuable aid at the Council Board."

Bankruptcy
Law.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd moved a series of resolutions on the Bankruptcy Law, of which notice had been given by the Birmingham Chamber to the following effect:—

- (1) "That the practical operation of the Bankruptcy Act, 1861, was very unsatisfactory to the commercial community."
- (2) "That there was need for a consolidation of the Statute Law on the subject."
- (3) "That there was need for great reduction in the costs of administration, especially as respected the charges of solicitors."
- (4) "That a chief judge should be appointed to secure uniformity of decisions and greater facilities and economy in cases of appeal."
- (5) "That the distinction constituted by Section 128 of the Act of 1861, by which the official assignee is made sole assignee and collector of every debt due to the estate which does not exceed £10, should be abolished."
- (6) "That the estates of deceased insolvents should be administered in the Court of Bankruptcy."
- (7) "That the assignee should be required in all cases to issue dividend warrants within fourteen days after a dividend is declared."
- (8) "That the limitation in Section 221 of the Act of 1861, by which an offender was only punishable for a misdemeanour if committed within three months prior to bankruptcy, should be abolished."
- (9) "That there should be greater certainty in the operation of the penal clauses which then appeared to be practically inoperative."
- (10) "That the Bankruptcy Law of England, Scotland, and Ireland should, as far as practicable, be assimilated."

- (11) "That Parliament should provide means for the recovery of British bankruptcy assets situated in any part of the British Empire, and endeavour by treaty negotiation with foreign Governments to obtain the like means for the recovery of British bankruptcy assets situated in foreign countries."
- (12) "That the House of Commons should be petitioned to appoint a Select Committee to enquire into the practical operation of the Bankruptcy Act, 1861."
- (13) "That a deputation proceed to the Lord Chancellor to lay before him the views of the Association."

At the close of the meeting the Lord Chancellor received a deputation led by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, and the representations of the Association were promised most careful consideration. Shortly afterwards the Chamber, at a special meeting, expressed their satisfaction that the Law of Bankruptcy was about to undergo a searching investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Commons. At this meeting they considered the report of a Committee, the adoption of which was moved. An amendment was, however, moved, in which it was stated that whilst they were of opinion that there were in the report many charges of maladministration which were but too true, "several things are herein made the basis of accusations which cannot be maintained ; that the charges which were true were so mixed up with others that would not "stand the test of examination" that it would not be just for the Chamber to endorse the report with its approval. After discussion this amendment was withdrawn.

At the same meeting of the Association Mr. J. S. Patent Laws Wright moved :—

- (1) "That the granting of patents for improvements and discoveries in manufactures is right in principal and has been found beneficial in operation."
- (2) "That the present Patent Laws require amendment in various details, more especially as respects the tribunal for the adjudication of disputes and infringements."

A delegate from Newcastle-upon-Tyne moved as an amendment "That it is expedient to abrogate the Patent Laws," but this was lost by a minority of 6 votes to 18. The first resolution mentioned above was then carried ; and having regard to the fact that the report of the Royal Commission on Patent Laws was expected to be issued in a few days the second resolution was withdrawn and the following substituted :—

"That the present Patent Law requires amendment in various details, and that on the report of the Royal Commission, the Standing Committee take such steps as they may think best for eliciting the opinion of the various Chambers thereon."

Partnership
Law
Amendment.

The third resolution moved at the meeting of the Association was that of which Mr. Geo. Dixon had charge, viz. :—

"That this meeting approves of the principles embodied in the Partnership Law Amendment Bill, as passed by the House of Commons, and read a first time in the House of Lords in the session of 1863, viz. :—the extension of limited liability to private partnerships and the power to give clerks a share of profits in trading concerns without acquiring the rights or becoming subject to the liabilities of partners."

After an animated discussion an amendment was moved and carried in favour of the appointment of a Select Committee to take evidence on the subject. The Chamber determined, however, to persist in their efforts and the Bill was re-introduced by Mr. Scholefield, and passed a second reading. When it went into Committee an important amendment was moved by Mr. T. Baring, M.P., and carried :—"That all limited partnerships should be distinguished by the addition of the word 'registered' to the name of the firm in all its dealings and transactions." As this amendment was regarded as objectionable, Mr. Scholefield withdrew the Bill on the understanding that the Government would introduce one dealing with the subject in the next session.

Swedish
Tariff.

The Chamber had under consideration the Swedish Tariff, and, in reporting thereupon to the Board of Trade,

urged that an effort should be made to induce the Swedish Government to substitute *ad valorem* for specific duties on hardware goods.

A letter was received from the Foreign Office Dutch Customs Tariff. intimating that negotiations were in progress for a new Commercial Treaty between France and Holland, and it was decided to inform Earl Russell that the Council, believing the Tariff of Holland to be a moderate one, did not consider it necessary to take action beyond urging on the Foreign Office the necessity of watching the progress of the negotiations with a view to preventing any injury to British interests. In their letter to Earl Russell the Council described the Tariff as extremely moderate in comparison with the Tariffs of other European States—ranging, for the most part, from 3% to 5% *ad valorem*, and that they did not think it necessary to send a deputation to Holland to obtain information on the matter. Lord Russell replied that Her Majesty's Minister at the Hague had been requested to send particulars of any proposition that might detrimentally affect the Birmingham district.

A most important letter was received from the Austrian Customs Tariff. Foreign Office on the 12th July, 1864, stating that whilst there did not appear to be any immediate prospect of the adoption by the Government of Austria of a Free Trade Policy, Earl Russell had reason to suppose that the visit to Vienna of some intelligent and influential members of Commercial Associations in England competent to communicate with similar bodies in the Austrian Dominions and to point out to them the advantages which would accrue from the adoption in Austria of a system of free trade which had been so eminently successful in England, would not be viewed with disfavour by the Austrian Government, although it could not at the moment take any active steps "or show any decided partiality for the object in view." The Chamber decided to deal with this matter through the Association of Chambers of Commerce, and the latter body held a special meeting of the Standing Committee, when it was decided that a deputation interested in Austrian Commerce should visit Austria

to bring under the notice of the public and commercial bodies in that country the desirableness of a change in their fiscal policy.

**The Govern-
ment as
Manufac-
turers.**

On the 25th August, 1864, a communication was received from Mr. J. D. Goodman on the subject of Government manufactures, and it was decided to present a memorial to Lord Palmerston against any increase thereof. In the memorial the Chamber stated that they viewed with considerable apprehension the great increase which had, within the previous ten years, taken place in the amount of Government manufactures. Continuing, they stated that this course was open to serious objections, inasmuch as it operated to interfere with and derange private enterprise, and sacrificed all the advantages to be derived from open competition. Government establishments, it was asserted, could rarely, if ever, produce articles at the same cost—if the calculations were extended over a number of years—as private manufacturers who were subject to home and foreign competition. The experiments then already made to establish Government manufactures had not produced satisfactory results, inasmuch as the accounts presented to Parliament were “manifestly fallacious as representing the real cost of production,” because they left out important elements necessary to be taken into account. In view of this the Chamber urged in their memorial that the Government should not sanction any further extension of the principle; that a portion of the requisite supplies for the public service should be obtained from private manufacturers; and that future accounts rendered to Parliament should contain a full statement of every item of cost and be audited by disinterested and competent parties.

**The British
Association.**

On September 17th, 1864, the Vice-President of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Wright), on behalf of the Council, addressed a letter to the British Association for the advancement of science, stating that the Chamber had much pleasure in uniting with other public bodies of the town in inviting the Association to hold their next meeting (*viz.*, in 1865) in Birmingham. As is well known, the invitation was accepted, and the Association met here

in 1865. It is interesting to place on record that this great Association will also meet in Birmingham in the autumn of 1913—the Centenary year of the Chamber.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

1865.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on February 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, 1865, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. John S. Wright, J. D. Goodman, Geo. Dixon, and G. B. Lloyd.

The President of the Association (Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd) moved on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber a resolution on the subject of Bankruptcy Law Reform, which opened with an assertion that the experience of the commercial community and the evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in the previous session, combined to show that a thorough reform of the English law of bankruptcy, and the procedure under it (notwithstanding the comprehensive statute of 1861) was urgently needed. Among other desiderata named in the resolution were provisions for the safe, economical, and speedy realisation and distribution of bankrupt estates; for adequate and certain punishment for insolvency arising from the wilful and reckless incurring of debt as well as for actual fraudulent bankruptcy; for the appointment of a Chief Judge to secure uniformity of decisions and greater facilities and economy in cases of appeal; for the administration in the Court of the estates of deceased insolvents; for the abolition of the limitation by which an offender was only punishable for misdemeanour committed within three months of bankruptcy; for the unification, as far as possible, of the Bankruptcy Laws of England, Scotland, and Ireland; for the recovery of British bankruptcy assets situate in any part of the

British Empire and the endeavour by negotiation or otherwise to obtain means for the recovery of such assets in foreign countries ; for the abolition of the rule by which secured creditors were permitted to vote for deeds of composition in respect to such part of their claims as was secured ; and for the consolidation of the entire statute law on the subject. After keen discussion, in which Mr. George Dixon spoke in favour of an amendment moved by a Wolverhampton delegate, the amendment was lost by 25 votes to 3, and the Birmingham resolutions carried unanimously.

In their half-yearly report the Council stated that there had been a considerable advance towards a much needed reform, and that, in reply to a deputation from the Association of Chambers of Commerce, the Lord Chancellor had admitted that he was entirely of opinion that a radical change in the law was needed. His lordship proposed (*inter alia*) to abolish imprisonment for debt, and suggested that the discharge of a bankrupt should be at the option of his creditors. Concluding his remarks, the Lord Chancellor requested that the Association would forward him their opinions on certain questions, and the Chamber immediately afterwards held two special meetings, at which a series of answers was adopted and forwarded to the Lord Chancellor for his guidance. Among other answers given by the Council was one to the effect that "Trust Deeds executed by three-fourths of the creditors in number and amount should be made binding upon other creditors and should supersede Bankruptcy." Even in the twentieth century the Chamber has strongly advocated that the principal creditors should have the power of determining whether an estate should be administered under a Deed of Assignment or in Bankruptcy ; but, unfortunately, the official element has consistently prevailed, and thus the most insignificant creditor has still the power to force an estate into bankruptcy.

**Partnership
Law.**

The Chamber was evidently not inclined to let the question of the amendment of the Partnership Laws fall into the category of forgotten things, for at the meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce Mr. George Dixon, on behalf of Birmingham, moved :—

“That this meeting is of opinion that it is advisable to alter the partnership laws so far as to declare that receiving a share of profits instead of or in addition to a fixed rate of interest for money lent to a private trading concern should not make the lender a partner.”

“That this meeting is of opinion that it would be advisable to alter the partnership laws so far as to declare that giving a clerk or manager a share of the profits in addition to or in lieu of a salary should not constitute such clerk or manager a partner.”

In moving the resolution, Mr. Dixon pointed out that it was inexpedient for lenders to get a fixed rate of interest wherever they were not partners, and urged that it should be a variable rate. This would be fair to lenders, as they would get that to which they were entitled, and borrowers would feel they had not got a large fixed interest to pay. The suggested amendment of the law would be an advantage to the creditors, as under the then existing law the lender virtually took from the estate a large proportion of what would otherwise go to the creditors. On former occasions, Mr. Dixon said, many objections were made to this change as calculated to lead to fraud and deception, but that might equally exist under the state of the law then in force, so that the change in the law would not make matters any worse. Mr. Dixon then pointed out that it was only for some sixty or seventy years that the prevailing partnership law had existed, and that prior to that persons embarking part of their capital in trade were not liable to the full extent of their fortunes. The law, he added, was altered owing to a misapprehension, and it had been declared inexpedient by a Committee of the House of Commons. The motion was seconded by Mr. W. H. Wills (of tobacco fame), of Bristol, and was then subjected to a volley of criticism, the accuracy of which would not be admitted by commercial men to-day. One gentleman suggested that the proposed amendment of the law would diminish the security of the creditor and would “deprive young traders of a large portion of their profits upon the accumulation of which they must depend for their future capital.” An amendment was moved that the following words should be added after the first resolution :—

“In which case the money lent (*i.e.*, by a limited partner) should be liable for the debts of the firm for twelve months after it was withdrawn—the loan to be registered.”

This was carried by 24 votes to 6, and then a delegate objected to the second resolution on the ground that it would occasion much dissatisfaction among clerks. They would, he said, call themselves one of the firm, and, on leaving, would go and set up as “late one of the firm,” and inflict much annoyance and injury on their late employers. This gentleman clearly failed to realise that it would be optional on the part of the firm to give a share of the profits to clerks or managers. At any rate, the meeting did not accept his views, as the resolution was carried by 18 votes to 8.

The Chamber's persistence in regard to this matter bore fruit before the close of the year. The last Partnership Bill prepared by the Chamber and introduced by Mr. Scholefield was withdrawn in 1864 on the understanding that the Government would take up the subject and introduce a Bill. In their half-yearly report the Council were able to congratulate the Chamber that this had been done, and that a desirable alteration of the law had received the sanction of Parliament. The Council added: “It is doubtless one of the most important measures passed during the session, especial reference being made to it in Her Majesty's speech at the dissolution.” The Act provided (*inter alia*) that the advance of money by way of loan to a trader upon a contract in writing that the lender should receive a rate of interest varying with the profits or should receive a share of the profits arising from the business should not constitute the lender a partner; that no contract for the remuneration of a servant or agent by a share of profits should of itself render such servant or agent a partner either as to rights or responsibilities. Needless to say the Chamber expressed their deep indebtedness to Mr. Scholefield for the attention he had for some years given to the matter and for his perseverance.

Another motion of the Chamber which was submitted to the Association was that moved by Mr. J. D. Goodman (Chairman of the Birmingham Small Arms Trade), to the effect that "the recent increase and extension of Government manufacturing establishments was to be deprecated as wasteful in expenditure of public money and as instituting a competition alike unfair and injurious to the private manufacturers." In a powerful speech Mr. Goodman stated that the defence of the country was the first consideration and that no consideration of economy or of private interest should interfere with that in the slightest degree. "But," he added, "if private enterprise is sufficient to supply everything that is required for this purpose he contended that it was wrong in principle and wanting in economy for the Government to set up manufacturing establishments of its own." After quoting many telling facts in support of the resolution, Mr. Goodman said :—"Another way in which the Government manufactures injuriously affected private manufacturers was this: the superintendents of the Government manufactures were also superintendents of private manufactures." At that time the duties of the superintendent were defined to be "the suggestion of the amount of orders to be given out and the superintendence of the orders whilst in the course of execution." As Mr. Goodman bluntly stated, "The person who exercised those functions could not but be regarded as in some sort a competitor with the trade which he superintended." In conclusion, he moved that a deputation be appointed to wait upon the Secretary of State for War, and on the First Lord of the Admiralty to express to them the views of the Association on the subject of Government manufacturing establishments. There was then an uncomfortable pause, after which another Birmingham delegate (Mr. J. S. Wright) seconded the motion, at the same time stating that he would rather some other delegate should have done so, as it was a question affecting all the Chambers. The chairman (Mr. Sampson Lloyd) intervened for the purpose of reading some extracts from letters of Mr. Richard Cobden, who was averse to Government manufacturing establishments and in favour of the work being entrusted

Government
Manufac-
tures.

to private hands. A lengthy discussion ensued, and, ultimately, an amendment was carried deprecating the recent great increase in Government manufacturing establishments, and urging that such as did exist should be placed as nearly as possible on the footing of private establishments and be required to charge the Government such prices for their products as would preserve their capital intact.

**Railway
Rates.**

Very early in the history of the Association the Birmingham Chamber began to direct its efforts to the problem of railway rates. Mr. J. S. Wright moved at the meeting with which the previous paragraphs deal that "the present mode of charging the rates on goods traffic by railways is unequal and unjust, not being regulated by the exigencies of trade, but generally by the ability to combine which exists amongst the leading companies, and which operates prejudicially not only upon the trade of inland towns (where competition by shipping is impossible), but upon some of the most important manufacturing interests of the country." As an addition to the resolution he moved that a deputation wait upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Board of Trade for the purpose of an inquiry by a Royal Commission or Parliamentary Committee into the mode of fixing charges upon goods conveyed by railway and generally into the working of the railway system in connection with trade. In an interesting speech in which a number of comparative rates was quoted (*e.g.*, that the hardware rate to London was 27/6—a figure at which it still stands, plus, however, the 4% increase under the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1913), Mr. Wright mentioned that whilst in the year 1838 the charge from Birmingham to Liverpool on a certain item of traffic was 13/4, after the amalgamation of the competing railway companies it rose to 17/6, and on the conclusion of a private arrangement with the Great Western Railway Company to 20/-. The resolution was carried by 20 votes to 2, and thus the Birmingham Chamber and the Association started on their great task of watching over the interests of traders in railway matters. Shortly after the meeting a Royal Commission was appointed.

Birmingham had still another resolution to move at Sugar Duties the Annual Meeting of the Association, viz. :—

“That in the interests of commerce a re-adjustment of the Sugar Duties is desirable.”

This was moved by Mr. Thomas Lloyd, who said the question was whether there should be a series of discriminating duties on sugar or whether all kinds should be admitted at a uniform rate of duty. From a previous visit he had paid to the West Indies he had found that the different qualities of sugar were “not owing to any difference of quality in the cane but solely to the method of manufacture.” It followed, therefore, that the effect of placing a comparatively heavy duty on the best kind of sugar was to discourage the manufacture of that quality and encourage the manufacture of inferior qualities. As the qualities were produced by manipulative skill he thought the effect of a heavy tax on the superior kinds might be injurious. After some discussion it was decided to refer the matter to a Sub-Committee to investigate and report to the next meeting.

During this year the Council again gave much attention to communications from the Foreign Office relative to Foreign Tariffs. In their half-yearly report they stated that the new Zollverein Tariff had come into operation, and that whilst showing a considerable reduction of duties, it was still so protective as to prevent any considerable quantity of hardware goods finding their way into the German States.

German
Customs
Tariff.

During the revision of the Austrian Tariff the Chamber was advised by the Foreign Office to send a representative to Vienna, who was conversant with the hardware trades. At the request of the Council Mr. Henry Weiss undertook this onerous duty. He stayed in Vienna for three weeks and afforded information relative to the productions and trades of the Birmingham district, and at his departure he left a carefully prepared document with the English Commission, “in which was shown the injury Austria sustained by her prohibitive tariff, together suggestions for a revision which he considered would be advantageous to both countries.” The information afforded appears to have been highly appreciated, and

Austrian
Customs
Tariff.

Mr. Weiss received from the Austrian Minister of Commerce a letter warmly thanking him for the services he rendered. Two other members of the Chamber (Messrs. Everitt and Blews) also visited Vienna for the purpose of affording information as to the special trades with which they were connected. As a result of these efforts more favourable terms were obtained for Birmingham trades.

Italian
Customs
Tariff.

The Vice-President (Mr. J. S. Wright) visited Turin for the purpose of giving information to the British Commissioner in regard to the revision of the Italian Customs Tariff, and was informed by the latter that he had every confidence in the desire of the Italian Government to make the tariff so moderate as to give English manufacturers the fullest opportunities of supplying their productions to Italy.

Brazil.

During the year a petition was forwarded to Her Majesty's Foreign Minister praying that friendly relations might be established between the British Government and that of Brazil, and a reply was received to the effect that it was probable this might be done.

Tribunals of
Commerce.

The Council reported that the subject of Tribunals of Commerce had not received until recently any considerable amount of attention from commercial bodies, but that the necessity for more prompt judicial action in trading, and especially in shipping disputes, the difficulty legal authorities found in interpreting the technicalities of commerce, together with the liability which existed of incurring enormous expenses in unimportant cases, had induced some of the leading Chambers during the preceding few months, to discuss the matter with the view of ascertaining if similar tribunals to those existing in various countries on the Continent might not be established with advantage in Great Britain. An influential Committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Geo. Dixon, C. H. Wagner, A. Field, Henry Weiss, and Arthur Ryland, for the purpose of ascertaining the views of the various Chambers. Inquiries were addressed to 30 Chambers, of whom three replied as being in favour of the establishment of Tribunals of Commerce, the remainder stating that they had not fully considered the question. The Committee

was thereupon re-appointed with instructions to take such steps as might seem advisable for "promoting the formation of a public opinion on the subject."

The Council reported that the Merchandise Marks Act, in the promotion of which they took an active interest, had been found to work very advantageously, "having prevented to a very large extent the frauds that were previously of continuous occurrence. They believed, however, that the Act should be supplemented by provision for the Registration of Trade Marks which they said would increase the certainty and decrease the cost of maintaining the title to such marks in England and would also facilitate the procuring of more effective provisions than now exist for the protection of British Trade Marks in foreign countries.

Merchandise
Marks Act
and Trade
Marks
Registration

CHAPTER XXXVII.

1866.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd February, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, John S. Wright, Geo. Dixon, A. Field, Thomas Lloyd, Arthur Ryland, Henry Weiss, and Henry J. Harding (Secretary). In proposing the adoption of the annual report Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd (the President of the Association) said that during the previous year the opening at Moscow of an exhibition of the manufactures and industrial products of the Russian Empire furnished a favourable opportunity for obtaining accurate information as to the conditions and progress of Russian manufacturing industry. He endeavoured to obtain "experts" in textile and other fabrics to go out and make observations, but in that he failed, so that rather than allow the project to fall to the ground he went himself in conjunction with Mr. J. D. Goodman, of Birmingham, who was "a

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

thorough expert in hardware." They went, with the approval of Her Majesty's Government, accompanied by Mr. T. Michell, *attaché* to Her Majesty's Embassy at St. Petersburg, and the result of their inquiries was published in a report which, with the addition of several valuable statistical papers from the pen of Mr. Michell, was laid before Parliament and circulated among the various English Chambers of Commerce. At Moscow Mr. Lloyd delivered a speech which it was believed would do much to facilitate the extension of commercial intercourse.

Bankruptcy
Law Reform.

The most important debate at the Annual Meeting of the Association was that with regard to Bankruptcy Law Reform, upon which the Birmingham Chamber submitted a comprehensive series of resolutions. Having regard, however, to the fact that a Select Committee of the House of Commons had made a report containing certain specific recommendations for Reform, it was decided to take these *seriatim* before the Birmingham resolutions. This was evidently a wise proposal, because shortly afterwards the Attorney-General introduced a Bill to carry out the recommendations of the Select Committee and to consolidate the law on the subject. A Special Committee of the Chamber carefully examined the 317 clauses of the Bill, which, with one or two exceptions, they approved. They did not, however, approve of the clause abolishing imprisonment for debt, nor those clauses which rendered a bankrupt's discharge impossible under a period of six years unless a dividend of at least 6s. 8d. in £ had been paid. In regard to the former, they were supported by the Association of Chambers of Commerce, but in regard to the latter they were not. Unfortunately, owing to a change of Ministry, the Bill was abandoned, and the Council in the half-yearly report said that the new Ministry would earn the gratitude of the commercial classes if they procured the enactment of a measure that would consolidate the law, abolish unnecessary official interference, render punishment certain to reckless and dishonest traders, and ensure the speedy and economical realisation of insolvent estates. They also expressed regret that the Government authorities (*i.e.*,

the officials) had not consented to introduce in its integrity the Scottish system which had worked with complete satisfaction to all classes in that country, and would no doubt be equally effectual in England. The new Ministry soon afterwards intimated their intention of dealing with the subject, and Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, with other members of the Association, submitted to the Government the importance of immediate legislative action.

At the same Meeting of the Association Mr. Arthur Ryland moved a resolution in favour of the registration of Trade Marks, which was carried without opposition. After the meeting a deputation proceeded to the President of the Board of Trade (The Rt. Hon. T. Milner Gibson), who promised to give the matter every attention, although "he saw great difficulties in the way of such a measure." The success of our Trade Mark Laws shows conclusively that the views of the Board of Trade at that time were a long way behind those of business men.

Mr. Alfred Field then submitted to the Association a resolution to the effect that the declaration of principles by the Congress in Paris, 1856, fell short of the demands of civilisation, the requirements of commerce, and the growing desire to lessen the calamity of war in not extending to private property of belligerents on the ocean the freedom from seizure proclaimed for that of neutrals; that belligerent rights at sea were on a most unsatisfactory footing and that the Government be asked to devise means for remedying the evils known to exist. The previous question was moved on the ground that the Association was not competent to express an opinion, and was carried by 18 votes to 9. In their half-yearly report the Council, referring to this, stated that since the meeting "the European Powers [Russia, Austria, and Italy], now unhappily at war, have gone beyond the agreement entered into by the Plenipotentiaries at Paris in 1856, and have mutually resolved that no private property at sea (excepting contraband of war) shall be subject to seizure."

A communication was received from the Lords Committee of Council on Education in response to which the Council of the Chamber appointed some of their members to act, in conjunction with the Mayor, as a

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

Inter-
national
Maritime
Laws.

Paris
Universal
Exhibition,
1867.

Committee, for the purpose of distributing the space to intending exhibitors at the Paris Universal Exhibition, 1867, which had been allotted to Birmingham, Dudley, Bromsgrove, Redditch, and Stourbridge. As only about one-third of the space applied for was allotted, this was a work of considerable difficulty and labour. Altogether, space was allotted to 57 exhibitors.

Commercial
Treaty with
Austria.

Chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Henry Weiss the Council prepared, in connection with the negotiations for a Treaty of Commerce with Austria, a detailed statement showing the prices of the more important articles manufactured in this district, and the maximum duty under which an export trade to that country could exist. Before Her Majesty's Commissioners could get very far, however, Austria was engaged in war, and this put a stop to further discussions. In consequence of the most favoured nation clause contained in the Treaty of 1865, British goods were subject only to the lower duties imposed on German manufactures.

Railway
Charges.

For several years the attention of the Council had been called to the persistent efforts of Railway Companies to obtain powers by which they could, at their own discretion, make terminal and other charges, and during the session of 1866 the Council co-operated with the Liverpool Chamber to prevent this power being obtained by means of a clause in the Railways' Clauses Bill. Upon remonstrance, the President of the Board of Trade consented to the withdrawal of the clause, but after the Bill was amended in committee it was (by some oversight, it is said) reinserted. Mr. Scholefield, M.P. (the President of the Chamber) again called attention to the matter, and the President of the Board of Trade gave a distinct assurance that it should be abandoned.

Bank Rate.

A Special Committee of the Council was appointed to consider the question of the high bank rate of discount which had lasted for some time to the serious injury of trade. Upon the report of this Committee the Council appointed a deputation, consisting of Messrs. J. S. Wright, J. D. Goodman, C. Sturge, J. B. Browett, C. Reeves, and C. D. Sturge, to wait upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the purpose of urging upon Her Majesty's

Government the necessity of taking immediate steps to relieve the existing pressure by authorising the Governors of the Bank of England to make an additional issue of notes, without imposing any restriction as to the rate of discount. In their half-yearly report the Council added :—
 “ How far the deputation was instrumental in causing a reduction of the rate it is impossible to say, but it was satisfactory to find that at the next meeting of the Directors of the Bank of England the rate was reduced from 10 per cent. to 8 per cent., to the great relief of the commercial community.”

For many months a Special Committee of the Chamber Bank
Charter Act. which had held a very large number of meetings, had been engaged in considering the question of the revision of the Bank Charter Act. One of the members of this Committee—which was larger than ordinarily—was Mr. Jesse Collings, who has thus served the Chamber in one capacity or another for nearly half-a-century. The report of the Committee was received at the half-yearly meeting of the Chamber, held on the 31st January, 1867, and constitutes one of the most interesting documents in possession of the Chamber. Probably in regard to no other subject had so many meetings been held and so much care exercised.

The report was preceded by three resolutions, viz. :—

1st.—That the Bank Charter Act should be repealed and the Government loan repaid.

2nd.—That “ legal tender ” should be gold and silver or notes of the value of one pound and upwards issued by the Government.

3rd.—That Government should be empowered to issue other notes of one pound and upwards to the extent of half the annual revenue not payable in gold or silver, but receivable for taxes, customs, and by the Post Office and secured by Government Stock.

In their report the Committee stated that the Bank Charter Act, besides restricting the issue of provincial banks, divided the Bank of England into two departments, viz. : the issue department and the banking department,

and authorised an issue of notes to the extent of fourteen millions (once increased to fifteen millions), payable on demand in gold, but made no provision for a supply of gold to meet such notes, the debt due to the Bank of England by the Government being the basis on which they were issued. The Act also provided that for all other notes issued by the Bank gold and silver should be retained in the proportion of at least three-fourths of the former to one-fourth of the latter, and that the Bank should be compelled to buy with its own notes all gold offered to it at the rate of £3 17s. 9d. per ounce, and, further, that a weekly statement should be published in the London "Gazette" of the notes issued by the Issue Department, of the coin, bullion, and securities in the same department and also of the capital, deposits, money, and securities in the Banking Department. In 1845 an Act was passed extending the restriction to Scotland and Ireland.

The Committee carefully considered the objects sought to be obtained by these Acts, and also the way in which they had operated during the previous 22 years. The objects seemed to be the provision of a proper paper currency, the convertibility of such paper currency, and the prevention of panics and undue fluctuations in the value of money. However desirable the two first objects might be, the Committee regarded the third as of paramount importance to commerce, and considered that in securing the former the latter had been sacrificed. In proof of this they stated that it was only necessary to refer to the fact that, whilst there were only 10 variations in the rate of discount for the 22 years previous to the Act there were 142 changes in the 22 years subsequent thereto, and also to the fact that whilst the extremes of the rate were 4 per cent. and 6 per cent. during the former period, they were 2 per cent. and 10 per cent. during the latter. They stated as their opinion that these increased fluctuations had been caused mainly by the feeling of distrust which the working of the Act was calculated to produce in circles easily affected by the slightest indications of impending difficulty, and they thought that the operation of the Act tended to contract

the currency at a time when there should be special means of expanding it. The trade of the country having increased three-fold since 1844 there should have been at command the means of increased facilities for carrying it on, whereas panics had been as frequent and more serious. If further proof were needed that the Act was unsound in principle they added that it would be found in the fact of its repeated suspension and the effect thereof in arresting panics.

As a "corrective measure" the Act had failed and high rates of interest, instead of attracting gold as was anticipated, had tended to impair English credit by causing Bills on London, which formed largely an international currency, to be suspected and avoided. In consequence of this distrust Continental creditors, during recent panics, had required, instead of the customary bills, cash remittances, thereby necessitating a withdrawal of gold from the Bank of England. The Committee's report continued:—"In times of complete confidence clearing-house arrangements, cheques, etc., afford great facility for economising the legal tender currency, but the moment distrust arises such facilities are less available, discounts advance, or, in other words, the payment for the use of currency advances until a point is reached which cripples trade and entails distress upon the country.

The Committee considered it a grave error to leave the interests of the commercial community in any way in the hands of a single Joint Stock Company, whose own profit would naturally be their first object. They, therefore, recommended their resolutions, and in regard to the issue of notes by the Government suggested they might be put into circulation as loans on consols, to be held as security against them, believing that such notes would circulate freely when required and being independent of the efflux of gold would maintain credit and prevent a scarcity of the currency. They also believed that depreciation of such notes would be impossible, for, if from an increase of other currency the notes were no longer required by trade, the rate of discount would fall, and borrowers, being able to obtain loans at a less cost, would

repay the notes to Government and redeem their consols, and the remainder, on the slightest evidence of depreciation, would immediately be returned to Government in payment of taxes, customs, etc., and thus would be withdrawn from circulation until again required.

It should be stated that at the half-yearly meeting of the Chamber it was decided not to adopt the report, but to receive it and enter it on the minutes.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1867.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

The Chamber was represented at the meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 19th, 20th, and 21st February, 1867, by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, John S. Wright, W. H. M. Blews, A. Ryland, and H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Bankruptcy
Law Reform.

As in previous years the Birmingham Chamber again brought forward the great need for a reform in the Bankruptcy Laws, and the resolutions moved in the previous year were again proposed, "and also again, with slight modifications, unanimously adopted," to use the expression of the delegates in their subsequent report to the Council. It will be remembered that the principal recommendations of the Chamber were the appointment of a chief judge; the consolidation of the entire law and its assimilation throughout the United Kingdom; the provision of means for the recovery of British Bankruptcy Assets situate in colonial and foreign countries; and the adoption as far as possible of the principles of the Scottish law, which had been found to work satisfactorily. In their half-yearly report the Council stated that legislation on this important subject had been delayed year after year, and that each successive Ministry for several years had introduced a

measure having for its object a radical reform in the law, but that, unfortunately, nothing had been done to remedy the admitted inefficiency of the then existing system.

The Council anticipated that the measure introduced by the Attorney-General early in the session of 1867 would receive such attention from Parliament as to be enacted before the prorogation. They regretted to report, however, that "in consequence of Parliament being occupied, the greater part of the session with political discussion" (a disease to which Parliament is susceptible even in the twentieth century), the Bill had been withdrawn. "This," the Council stated, "was more vexatious from the fact that the principal Chambers of Commerce throughout the country and the commercial community generally, were favourable to the Bill, believing that, if enacted, it would remedy many of the principal abuses of the [then] existing law such as the cost of winding-up estates and administration by deed, etc." Continuing, the Council expressed the hope that the Scottish law would be taken as a model in any legislation, and again decided to impress upon the legislature the great importance of speedily passing a Bill which would provide for the punishment of the dishonest trader whilst protecting the interests of the creditor.

Mr. Arthur Ryland moved at the same meeting a resolution in favour of the registration of trade marks, which was identical with that passed unanimously in the previous year, and it was again carried.

Mr. J. S. Wright then invited the Association to pass a similar resolution to that proposed in 1866 on the subject of International Maritime Law to the effect that the declaration of principles by the Congress of Paris, 1856, fell short of the demands of civilization, the requirements of commerce, and the growing desire to lessen the calamity of war, in not extending to the private property of belligerents, except contraband of war on the ocean, the freedom from seizure claimed for that of neutrals. On the former occasion the previous question had been carried by 18 votes to 9; whilst on the present occasion the voting was equal, the Chairman giving his casting

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

Inter-
national
Maritime
Law.

vote in favour of the previous question, so that the question might be reserved for discussion at a future time. The Chamber, evidently, was not disposed to let the matter drop, for during the year they took advantage of a visit paid to the United States and Canada by their Vice-Chairman, Mr. Alfred Field, who undertook on their behalf to seek an interview with the principal Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade in those countries, with the view of ascertaining the state of feeling amongst the commercial classes there on the subject. Altogether Mr. Field, who was accompanied by his son (now Mr. H. C. Field, J.P., a Member of the Council of long-standing and for some years Vice-Chairman), then in his early teens, visited and addressed nine Chambers established across the Atlantic, and the Council reported their gratification that he was most courteously received by all of them ; that his arguments in favour of a change in the law of nations obtained the greatest attention ; and that "generally full assurances of the sympathy of those bodies " in the suggested changes on International Maritime Law were given.

Anglo-
Austrian
Treaty.

During the early part of 1867 the negotiations between the English Commissioners and the Austrian Government for the conclusion of a commercial treaty were re-opened, and it was intimated, presumably by the Foreign Office, that the Commissioners would be glad to receive delegates from the Chamber to represent the Hardware Trades, Mr. Henry Weiss and Mr. Maxwell Blews placed their services at the disposal of the Council who "gladly availed themselves of the generous offer," and appointed them as their representatives. There was clearly no lack of public spirit on the part of the Council or its members, and in their half-yearly report the Council stated that the thanks of the Chamber and the commercial community generally were due to Messrs. Weiss and Blews for the attention they had given to the matter, which had "involved a most serious sacrifice of their time." If evidence were needed of the valuable national services these gentlemen rendered to the community it is to be found in the letter which Mr. Louis Mallet (one of the British Commissioners) addressed to the

Chamber after their return. Mr. Mallet stated that although the delegates of the Chamber would, no doubt, report the result of their mission, he could not delay conveying to the Council, both on his own behalf and on that of his colleague (Mr. Morier) their best thanks for the "prompt and efficient assistance" which had been afforded to them, and for the "zeal and knowledge" which the Chambers' delegates had "displayed in the execution of their task." In a joint report Mr. Weiss and Mr. Blews stated that they had remained in Vienna three weeks, and that during that time they had placed themselves at the disposal of Mr. Mallet, and endeavoured, to the best of their ability, to carry out his suggestions and wishes. They added that at a later date they hoped to present a lengthy report upon the position and prospects of the Anglo-Austrian Tariff, but that in the meantime they would content themselves with expressing their sincere thanks for the great courtesy and kindness they received from Lord Bloomfield, Mr. Louis Mallet, Mr. Morier, and also from M. de Petris and the Austrian members of the Commission. "In fact," they added, "the consideration we received from all parties to whom we had the honour of being introduced causes us to look back with pleasure to this visit, and although the political and monetary position in Austria was not in a satisfactory condition, yet we trust that in a few months the commercial relations between England and Austria may be strengthened and developed by a Tariff which will alike be beneficial to that country and our own." Unfortunately the Treaty was, owing to various causes, not completed in 1867.

The Council also reported that some prospect existed of an improvement in the Russian Tariff. On the 12th July, 1867, the Emperor of Russia sanctioned the appointment of a special commission to meet during the autumn at St. Petersburg, with a view to a revision of the tariff. The object of the revision was professedly to establish a more equitable relation between "the value of the goods and the duty imposed on them." Considering however, the strong protectionist feeling which existed in Russia the Council thought it too much to expect that the revision would lead at once to any considerable measure

The Russian
Customs
Tariff.

of free trade ; but the Council felt that any revision of the then existing high tariff, toward greater uniformity in the rates of duty, might be "hailed as the commencement of a better state of things." The Council of the Chamber added, in their report : "It is to be hoped that the change to which this commission may lead will be followed in a few years hence, at latest, by a more cordial acceptance, on the part of that great Empire (numbering more than 70,000,000 of people in Europe alone) of those principles of political economy which the experience of other nations concur in demonstrating to be true."

Artisans'
Visit to Paris
Exhibition.

A letter was received from the Society of Arts, inviting the co-operation of the Chamber in promoting a movement to send skilled artisans to Paris to study the manufactures shown at the Universal Exhibition, with a view to their reporting upon the productions there exhibited, and comparing them with similar productions from this country. It was also suggested they should inspect some of the principal manufactures. The project had the support of the French Imperial Commission, who promised to afford the workmen on their arrival at Paris every possible facility.

The Council determined to co-operate with the Society of Arts, and directed a circular to be issued to the members of the Chamber inviting them to subscribe to a fund for the purposes. They were gratified to find that money was readily forthcoming, and, as a result, it was found possible to send twenty-four workmen, representing as many separate trades to proceed to Paris. Mr. W. C. Aitken, who, throughout the movement, rendered very great assistance, accompanied the workmen, and aided them in the preparation of their reports, which were published by the Society of Arts in a very cheap form. The Council strongly recommended their perusal to the manufacturers of the towns and the artisans employed in the various trades, and in so doing stated that the reports contained clear and succinct descriptions of the hardware productions of other countries, which were the result of very careful personal inspection by selected practical men, and might, therefore, be relied upon as trustworthy.

The notice of the Council was called to the fact that the Railway and Canal Companies in the town had decided for the future to deliver goods only at the doors of the consignees instead of warehousing or cellaring them as previously. It was explained that, on the action of the Council of the Borough, the Justices had fined the Railway Companies in consequence of their wagons obstructing the vegetable market on market days, and that this had caused the alteration contemplated by the Companies. The Council decided to do nothing in the matter, but it is, nevertheless, a fact, that it was not until well into the first decade of the twentieth century, when railway competition had been practically eliminated, that the Railway Companies ceased to render the larger service.

Railway
Deliveries.

During this year there was before the House of Commons a Bill for the extension of the jurisdiction of the County Courts. By the law then existing creditors had the power of suing in the superior courts for small sums, but under the Bill no costs would be allowed in suits in the superior courts, where the debt was under £20, except by special certificate of the judge. Many business firms who had small accounts in various parts of the country were of opinion that their interests would be seriously injured should the Bill become law, as they anticipated that a large number of dishonourable persons would refuse to pay under the idea that the creditors would not trouble to take out a plaint in a County Court at a great distance from their places of business, especially as payment would probably be ordered by periodical and minute instalments.

County
Court Acts.

A Committee of Manufacturers appointed at a meeting held on the 18th March, 1867, waited upon the Home Secretary (Mr. Walpole) on Friday, the 22nd April, 1867, with regard to the Bills introduced for the purpose of amending the Factory and Workshops' Acts. They especially directed his attention to the difficulties that it was thought would arise from the same trades being regulated by two very dissimilar Acts of Parliament. They felt that one effect would be to transfer children from the best conducted and healthiest manufactories to smaller ones where the arrangements were very imperfect and

Factory
Acts.

where Government interference was most needed and that this would alike be injurious to the larger manufacturers and to the children themselves. They further stated that there was a general desire on the part of manufacturers to promote education, and that if clauses similar to those proposed by Mr. Adderley and Sir Stafford Northcote in 1860 were added to the Workshops' Bill they would have hearty support, and in the opinion of the deputation, would be more effective than the educational provisions of the existing Factory Acts. In response to a question by Mr. Walpole, the deputation stated that there would be no objection to provisions being added to the Workshops' Bill, which would secure an efficient system of inspection. The deputation added that as women in the hardware trades generally worked less hours than were provided for by the Factory Acts no legislative interference was necessary in their case.

In conclusion, the deputation suggested that the Bills should be referred to a Select Committee who would bear evidence, and, consequently, be in a better position to frame a measure that would be advantageous to all parties.

It would appear that the Committee of Manufacturers were somewhat apprehensive as to the manner in which their views would be received by the community, and they therefore stated that they could not conclude without expressing their opinion that comparatively few persons had considered the evils that would be likely to result from the adoption of the two Bills. They claimed to be considered as desirous of promoting the education and well-being of the working people as any other section of the community, and whilst they had directed their attention principally to prevent legislation having an injurious effect upon the trades of the town in which all must be interested, they had not been unmindful of the other "and only less important matter."

In their half-yearly report the Council stated that the minute interference proposed by the Bills with the free and unrestricted labour of the district might involve serious consequences, and that it was to be regretted that these consequences had not received sufficient atten-

tion from the parties most interested. They added that they did not object to the principle of legislative protection being given to young children and women as respected excessive hours of labour, but that they deemed it highly important that due regard should be paid in the legislative provisions which gave that protection to the peculiar circumstances of the manufacturers of the district. In their subsequent half-yearly report, after the enactment of the two Bills—one dealing with Factories and one with Workshops—the Council said they would effect great changes in many trades, and that, whilst they trusted that good would result therefrom, it behoved all to do what good they could “to allay the evils” that might arise. Continuing, they said that the new laws were even then leading to the discontinuance of the employment of children in many factories.

The Chamber received a letter from the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce asking for their opinion as to the proposed new Chinese Tariff, but upon a careful examination the Council were unable to ascertain what would be the duties on the great bulk of the manufactures of the Birmingham district in consequence of the incompleteness of the schedule of articles. With the view of enabling them to understand the Chinese duties and to assist the Hong Kong Chamber in the matter, the Council forwarded a list of articles forming the chief manufactures of the district copied from the latest French Tariff. The Hong Kong Chamber were asked to return the list with the duty at present chargeable in China attached to each article.

A special meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce was held in London on the 26th November, 1867, when the Birmingham Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Alfred Field, Geo. Dixon, M.P., W. H. M. Blews, J. S. Wright, J. B. Browett, and H. J. Harding (Secretary). In opening the meeting Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd stated that the meeting had been called because it was thought essential if they were to induce the Government to pay attention in a practical form to their views they should bring them before the Government at an earlier date than the commencement of the session in February. The Birmingham resolutions moved at this

meeting related to Bankruptcy Law Reform, the Registration of Partnerships, the Registration of Trade Marks, and International Maritime Law. In the case of the last-named resolution the previous question was again carried on this occasion by a majority of three. All the other resolutions were carried.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

1868.

**Association
of Chambers
of Commerce**

The Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce was held in London on the 4th and 5th March, 1868, when the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, G. J. Johnson, Edward Peyton, John S. Wright, W. H. M. Blews, and H. J. Harding (Secretary). In opening the proceedings the President (Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd) said that he regretted to see by one of the papers that morning that the Bankruptcy Bill, which the Government had promised, appeared to have been drafted in part by solicitors practising in the Bankruptcy Court. He added :—"Although personally I have great respect for those gentlemen I fear a Bill which proceeds from that source would not be very satisfactory to the commercial community." He expressed the hope that every objectionable feature in the Bill would be "doggedly opposed," and trusted that "having agitated for ten years for bread" they would "not be put off with a stone."

**Bankruptcy
Law Reform.**

At the meeting of the Association referred to in the previous paragraph Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, at the request of the Birmingham Chamber, moved :—

"That a thorough reform of the English Law of Bankruptcy is urgently needed with a view to the more speedy and economical realization and distribution of the estate and to the suppression of fraud ;

that in the opinion of this Association the provisions of the Scottish Law of Bankruptcy (19th and 20th Vic. c. 79) have proved eminently successful in accomplishing these objects; that in any measure for the reform of the Law of Bankruptcy those provisions should be copied as far as possible, and that a deputation from the Association be appointed to wait upon the Lord Chancellor to urge the introduction of a Bill into Parliament based on the Scottish law this Session."

This resolution was carried without discussion.

On this subject the Lord Chancellor, acting for the Government, introduced a Bill, and Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, J. B. Browett, S. Booth, G. J. Johnson, J. S. Wright, and the Chairman of the Chamber (Mr. A. Field) were appointed as a Committee to report upon it. Their report was adopted at a meeting of the Council on April 21st. In this report it was stated that the Bill consisted of upwards of 500 clauses, more than one-fifth of which were entirely new. In the course of a lengthy report the Committee stated they were gratified to find that the Scottish system had been more closely followed than in any previous measure since the Act of 1861—a reform for which the Chamber had long agitated. It was proposed that after the adjudication of a bankrupt a meeting of creditors should be called to appoint a trustee who might have power to "agree for a specified sum to liquidate the bankrupt's estate" and pay over such dividend as the estate might yield. Also it was proposed that the first meeting of creditors should be convened simply by a notice in the "Gazette," but the Committee thought that creditors for all sums above £10 (afterwards altered by the Council to £5) ought to be summoned by letter. As regarded Deeds of Arrangement the Bill proposed to enact that all creditors should, before signing, prove their debt as in Bankruptcy, but the Committee did not approve of this clause on the ground that under it, as drawn, a Deed of Assignment would be held good in law as soon as it was registered, and could not be upset even by the clearest demonstration of fraud. The Committee also suggested that the liability of a bankrupt for misdemeanour

should not be limited to such offences as he had committed within four or six months, but that the period should be twelve months. Many other suggestions were made as to defects which it was felt existed in the bill, but those mentioned above will be sufficient to show how keen the Council were to secure a really beneficial measure of reform.

**Registration
of Partner-
ships.**

Mr. Peyton moved the Chamber's usual resolution on the subject of the need for the registration of the names and addresses of all partners composing trading firms. After some discussion, in which one delegate suggested that the names of partners should be inscribed on the door post, the resolution was withdrawn in order that a distinct proposition should be submitted for carrying out the object of the resolution.

**Inter-
national
Monetary
Union.**

Mr. Peyton then proposed a resolution in favour of the formation of an International Monetary Union, in which it was asserted that the proposal had been favourably received by nearly all civilised centres in the world, and that it seemed probable if Great Britain did not join that she would be almost the only great country left out of the Union. As a body of Royal Commissioners, however, was sitting on the subject the motion was withdrawn.

**Registration
of Trade
Marks.**

Immediately after this Mr. Peyton, also on behalf of Birmingham, moved that a deputation wait upon the Board of Trade to urge upon the Government the importance of introducing a measure during the next Session of Parliament for the registration of trade marks in England, and that, in the event of their declining to do so, a private member be requested to introduce a Bill for carrying out the previous recommendations of the Association. The resolution was carried.

**Technical
Education.**

For some months the question of scientific or technical education had occupied public attention. A Select Committee of the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr. Samuelson, seconded by Mr. Dixon (of Birmingham), had been appointed, and Mr. Alfred Field, Mr. John S. Wright, Mr. W. C. Aitken, and Dr. George Lloyd had given evidence before it. The Council, in their half-yearly report stated that it was the general opinion of the witnesses examined that Government assistance would be highly beneficial and might be properly given in

establishing schools of science. They added that the rapid progress in manufactures in other countries, more especially Prussia, Saxony, Belgium, France, and the United States, must be ascribed as a chief cause to the high education, both general and scientific of the artisan class as well as of the masters. Prudent practical men, it was said, would note that the Government in all these countries had established schools, general or technical, that had quickly attained high excellence.

These schools were open to the whole people and coincident with the establishment of them had been the extension of manufactures and increased skill and excellence in their productions ; and those who had been abroad to investigate had reported that it was to these Government schools that the progress was mainly due. The safe deduction, therefore, appeared to be that in this country the Government ought to establish similar schools. In a subsequent report, however, the Council stated that however proper and desirable it might be that the Government should itself establish these schools, it was the clear duty of Birmingham not to slacken in its efforts, and it was, therefore, recommended that members of the Chamber should contribute to a Trade School, proposed to be established by the Midland Institute.

In the course of their first half-yearly report the Council stated that Trade Unions, Rules of Trade, Strikes, and kindred subjects, were questions of large interest to this manufacturing country. Trade Unions existed, they said, and could not be ignored. It was impossible to deny the right of working men to combine for their own just interest. The part of wisdom was to do all that could be done by persuasion and enlightenment to induce Trade Unions to keep their actions within the limits of fairness and justice as the only conduct that could be permanently successful. The Council considered that the Stone Masons' Strike which began in April and lasted several months was a proper occasion to try if any good could be done towards effecting a settlement by conciliation. In order to offer a Board of Conciliation that should be as unexceptionable as possible to the workmen as well as the masters, the Council arranged

Trade
Unions and
Strikes.

with the Trades' Council of the town that three deputies from their body should join with three members of the Chamber in offering themselves as a Joint Committee of Conciliation. The stonemasons on strike and the master builders were invited each to send three deputies to meet the Joint Committee in the Council Room of the Chamber. The offer was readily accepted, and some meetings were held—unfortunately without success up to the time of reporting; but as the meetings might possibly be renewed the Council abstained from further statement. Concluding their report on this matter the Council said that the attempt was made the more readily from the hope that it might open up the way to some permanent Board of Conciliation to which employers and their workmen might apply in their differences before resorting to actual hostility.

**Government
Control of
Telegraphs.**

In this year a Bill was introduced into Parliament providing for the purchase by the Government of the entire Telegraph System, to be, in the future, worked by the Post Office. If the Bill became law, as was anticipated, the Council thought it would result in great advantage in regularity of working and greater extension of telegraphic facilities to all parts of the country. They also hoped that important reductions in the charges would be made, but they could not avoid expressing the opinion that the sum proposed to be paid to buy out the rights and properties of the Companies was unfairly large, and was likely to prevent an early reduction to the low rates for telegraphing that under the Post Office management would probably have otherwise soon proved to be sufficient.

**Railways
Regulation
Bill.**

A Railways Regulation Bill was introduced in this session which contained two clauses the Council considered to be objectionable. The first was intended to prevent the enclosure of many small parcels into one—a proposal that excited much hostility all over the country. Mr. J. S. Wright and Messrs. Bragg and Shaw formed part of a numerous and influential deputation which waited on the President of the Board of Trade to urge the withdrawal of this proposal. The Government gave way and withdrew the obnoxious clause. The second objection was to a clause which proposed to throw on the owners

of goods despatched by through booking on a mixed transit, partly by land and partly by sea, the risk of loss or damage by sea, which, at that time, attached by law to the carriers. Mr. Dixon promised to move the adoption of this clause in Committee.

In their second half-yearly report the Council congratulated the Chamber on the adoption of a new Tariff by the Russian Government, in which the previous high duties had been to an important extent reduced. They also announced that they desired to place on record that this country, and Birmingham in particular, were largely indebted to a valuable member of their body—Mr. Wagner—for obtaining important reductions on the manufactures of this district. “Mr. Wagner patiently, but perseveringly, explained to the official representatives of the Russian Government appointed to attend to the question the excessive amount of the existing duties and the urgent need and value to both countries of a material reduction on hardware and the productions of the Midland District of England, and, ultimately, his exertions were crowned with success.”

Russian
Customs
Tariff.

For many months in 1868 the Council were in correspondence with the Foreign Office respecting the unfair imposition by Portugal of higher duties on British manufactures than were charged by that country on similar articles produced in France. The Council considered this to be an infringement of our Treaty rights under the most favoured nation clause—a clause which, by-the-bye, does not apply to this country even at the present time (1913).

Portuguese
Customs
Duties.

In their first half-yearly report the Council regretted they were unable to record any notable improvement in the trade of the town or country, adding that if periods of contraction and depression of trade were, as they believed, but the natural and necessary consequence of dangerous expansion and over-speculation, which were always found to precede them, then they would expect, on looking back, to find that the long-continued depression from which the town and country suffered was preceded by an equally “great period of high speculation.” Probably, it was suggested, the memories of business men

State of
Trade.

would lead them to pronounce that they were but then attaining to a balance. "If we would take wisdom from the past and avoid these trying times of depression in future we must prevent the previous expansion which causes them."

In their next half-yearly report the Council stated that after the long-continued depression they could report a small and gradual but apparently trustworthy improvement. The unsound conditions appeared to have been removed, and it might reasonably be hoped that confidence and enterprise would shortly increase. "We may now," the report continued, "expect that we are entering upon the commencement of the ordinary commercial cycle: first a period of gradual improvement, next the reign of moderation and good trade for the usual time, this desirable condition probably soon to be followed by the excess of energy, over speculation and extravagance, with the necessary result—collapse and ruin." They added that it became every prudent man to derive from the lessons of the past wise caution for the future, and so to endeavour to prevent the recurrence of "this lamentable catastrophe." Concluding the Council said:—
 "The trade of the world will owe a deep debt of gratitude to the economist who shall point out the laws and cure of commercial crises and panics."

CHAPTER XL.

1869.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on February 23rd, 24th, and 25th, 1869, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Alfred Field, R. S. Bartleet, J. S. Wright, and H. J. Harding (Secretary).

The Chamber had again given notice to move at the meeting of the Association a resolution on the subject of Bankruptcy Law Reform, but Bristol seems on this occasion to have got first place. Mr. Field withdrew the Birmingham resolution, and the Chamber's delegates supported that of Bristol. The Chamber itself, however, was not inactive in the matter, for on the 16th April, 1869, a special meeting was held to consider a Bill introduced by the Attorney-General, which it was said was comparatively brief (it had 135 clauses) and simple. At this meeting a report was submitted by Mr. S. Booth (Chairman of the Bankruptcy Committee) which fairly summarised the provisions of the Bill. Among other things it proposed to appoint a Chief Judge—a provision for which the Chamber had long been agitating. It also proposed that the debtor should not himself petition for adjudication, and that one or more creditors whose united debts amounted to £50 might do so. Under its provisions a bankrupt would be entitled to his discharge by consent of his creditors, if obtained, or absolutely on payment of 10s. in the £, and all after acquired property would be made liable at intervals of five years to the extent of 10s. in the £.

In their report the Committee added that it would not fail to be observed that several important points of practice and principal that had been advocated by the Chamber were embodied in the Bill, notably the points mentioned above and certain principles of the Scottish law. The Committee remarked, however, that the practical value of the proposals, as far as regarded their economic working would be greatly dependent upon the scale of fees to be adopted and the general rules and orders to be framed by the Lord Chancellor and Chief Judge; and they recommended that such general rules and orders should only have provisional authority until the end of the next session, so as to necessitate their discussion in Parliament, and, consequently, to afford an opportunity for the commercial community to express an opinion upon them. It appears from the report that the Bill was subsequently amended in various particulars, and the Committee believed that if it became law it would "lessen the

number of bankruptcies, increase the proportion of assets to be divided among creditors, afford greater protection to honest men and diminish the reckless trading which had existed for many years." Before the end of the year it reported that the Bill had passed and that the Chamber was to be congratulated thereupon, as it was believed the Act would "improve the state of commercial morality and create greater confidence between creditor and debtor."

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

At the meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, Mr. Alfred Field moved the Chambers usual resolution in favour of a law being passed providing for the registration of trade marks in England. The resolution was carried unanimously, and it is interesting to record that as a result of the persistent efforts of the Chamber, who initiated the matter, and of the Association, a Bill was introduced during the session providing for the voluntary registration of trade marks—a step in the right direction. Unfortunately the Bill was only introduced at a late period of the session and it could not be passed into law, but, at any rate, an impression had been made on the Government—a result which could not have been produced if there had been no Chamber of Commerce or bodies similarly constituted and combined.

Food and
Drugs Act.

On the motion of Mr. Field the Association passed a resolution that the Act for preventing the adulteration of Food or Drink, 1860 (referred to as Mr. Scholefield's Act), should be amended so as to extend its provisions to drugs.

Inter-
national
Maritime
Laws.

The vexed question of International Maritime Law and the exemption of all private property (except contraband) from capture on the high seas was again brought before the Association by Mr. Alfred Field, who said that, although the Birmingham Chamber was often divided on questions of commercial policy, "they were united as one man on this subject."

In moving the resolution Mr. Field made a very able speech in which he showed how much support was given to the proposition on the other side of the Atlantic which, as has been previously stated, he had visited on behalf of his Chamber. A debate of considerable interest took place, from which it appears that the objectors felt it was a subject

upon which the Association should not proceed to a vote. This position was strongly contested by Mr. George Dixon, M.P., on behalf of Birmingham, but it was ultimately resolved by 16 Chambers against 12 that the question be not put.

Representation was made to the Chamber during the first half of the year that the various Railway and Canal Companies had placed considerable restrictions on the transmission of percussion caps and declined to carry them except at an increased freight accompanied also with a declaration as to the contents of the packages. These new regulations of the Railway Companies caused parcels of goods thus declared to contain percussion caps to be regarded with suspicion at the seaports, and the result, ultimately, was that nearly every steamer or sailing vessel refused to carry them on any terms. The serious injury which thus resulted to one of the important trades of the town induced the Council to make provisions for the demonstration by public experiments of the harmless character of percussion caps. These experiments took place at Birmingham on April 28th. There were present by invitation of the Council a large number of persons interested, including delegates from the principal Railway Companies, Canal Companies, and Marine Insurance Companies. The result of the experiments completely bore out the statement of the Council as to the innocent character of percussion caps, and proved that no danger whatever could result from either their carriage or storage. Immediately after the experiments the Railway Companies willingly withdrew all obstructions to the rail transit of these articles, and the impediments to their shipment at the ports were, for the most part, removed.

It is most interesting to record that the action of the Chamber on this matter arose out of a letter addressed to the Chairman by Mr. J. D. Goodman (Chairman of the Birmingham Small Arms Co.), Mr. Chas. Osborne, Gun Manufacturer, and Edwin Ludlow and Alfred Eley, Percussion Cap Manufacturers. These gentlemen stated that they were prepared on behalf of the trade to prove—

Percussion
Cap
Experiment

- (1) That percussion caps are small caps of copper charged with fulminate of mercury—an ingredient

highly dangerous when in bulk, but harmless in a percussion cap—the quantity present not being more than half a grain.

- (2) That the fulminate of mercury lay at the bottom of the cap, the thickness being .020, whilst the wall of copper which surrounded it was 0.245, or twelve times as great, the minute subdivision of the dangerous ingredient ensuring that under any circumstances that might occur, either by fire or collision, nothing worse could happen than a number of very minute individual explosions.
- (3) That caps were ordinarily put up in tin boxes of 100, 250, and 300 in each box.
- (4) That the explosion of one cap in a box would never extend to more than a very few in the immediate neighbourhood of the exploded cap.
- (5) That a box of caps might receive a heavy blow from a heavy stamp (or press), and the only result would be that a very few more than those caps which received the blow would explode.
- (6) That the same result would follow if a box of caps were placed on a rail and a wagon allowed to pass over them.
- (7) That if a box of caps were held in a fire the individual caps would explode as the heat reached them, but there would be no explosion sufficient to blow off the lid of the box.
- (8) That if a package containing a large number of boxes of caps were placed in a fire nothing more would result than a series of minute individual explosions.
- (9) That it was the practice of cap manufacturers where a large number of waste caps had accumulated to put them in bulk into a fire in order to burn out the charges of deteriorating powder for the purpose of recovering the copper—a process which was found to be entirely unattended with danger.
- (10) That on the occasion of the destruction of Mr. Richard Walter's manufactory in 1862 by the explosion of fulminate of mercury in bulk, a case

containing 5cwt. of military percussion caps ready for transit was found afterwards uninjured in the ruins.

- (11) That percussion caps had been carried all over the world for 45 years, and there was no record of any accident having happened either on land or sea.

The Council of the Chamber met at Messrs. Ludlow's premises for the experiments, when the principal Railway Companies and Marine and Fire Insurance Companies were well represented, and the experiments were carried out to the satisfaction of all.

A measure was introduced into Parliament during the session by Messrs. Mundella and Hughes, M.P's., for the protection of the funds of "Trade Societies," and also for the purpose of repealing all laws, statutory or common law, against industrial combinations in restraint of trade. The Council petitioned against the Bill, whilst expressing itself willing and desirous that Trades' Unions should obtain full protection for their funds by the removal of the disabilities which prevented their registration under the Friendly Societies' Act. At the same time they deprecated any change in the law with regard to combinations "unless accompanied by new legislation that should give to a workman desiring to work efficient protection against intimidation or pressure, direct or indirect, by combinations of his fellow workmen." This Bill was ultimately withdrawn, and the Government introduced a short Bill to enable Trades' Unions to obtain full legal protection for their funds. The Council commended the matter to the attention of all persons interested expressing the view that every man who desired to pursue his own honest labours in accordance with his own views should be afforded all possible protection against restraining combinations.

Mr. Robert Martineau addressed a letter to the Chamber, forwarding samples of sugar grown by Mr. Rudder on the Macleay River, New South Wales, and the Council decided to inform him that the samples appeared to be of good quality and that they were glad the growing of sugar-cane had been introduced into the colony.

Trades
Unions' Bill.

Australian
Sugar.

The Suez
Canal.

In their half-yearly report the Council stated that the Chairman (Mr. Thomas Lloyd) and Mr. John S. Wright, by request of the Council, accepted the invitation of the Viceroy of Egypt to attend the inauguration of the Suez Canal. These gentlemen presented to the members a report of their journey, and the Council added that, judging from the number of steamers advertised to go through the Canal from this country and the Continent of Europe, a very large proportion of the trade with the East would pass along this route and that great benefit would, naturally, result to the manufacturers of this country, the exporters of produce in India, and to the world at large in the saving of time and consequent reduction of cost of transit.

State of
Trade.

The Council reported that members could not be congratulated on any great improvement in the state of trade. Although in many exceptional articles business had been very good manufacturers generally had not been fully engaged, and Birmingham and District had not recovered from the depression brought about by the late panic. The artificial prosperity which had been created by the erection of new furnaces, new ironworks, and new manufactories under the stimulus of the "Joint Stock Companies' Mania" having passed away the depression continued. The power of production in the iron trade had so largely increased, especially in the North of England, that any fresh demand for iron was met by an excess of supply; whilst the advance of prices had also barely kept pace with the rise of wages. Continuing the Council said that Belgium and Prussia and other countries which were importers of hardware and heavy ironwork, etc., met our manufacturers as keen competitors in neutral markets, and this was to be the more regretted as ten years previously they considered that in nearly all such manufactures, "with the advantage of our coalfields and skilled labour," we could "defy competition." In 1869, however, they considered it impossible for this country to continue to be the greatest manufacturing country if the wages of our artisans were to be very much more and their hours of labour very much less than those of the workmen in other countries with which the country had to compete;

“ unless our countrymen maintain their lead in skill and intelligence. The attention of the Council had been drawn to the “ mortifying fact ” that the United States were great exporters of edge tools, agricultural implements, and very many articles of small ware, not only to South America and the Brazils, but also to our Colonies. In Australia a very large proportion of the goods in a hardware store were of American manufacture, but were made out of English iron and steel, which not only paid a heavy duty but was manipulated by workmen earning fully 75 per cent. higher wages. This, the Council said, showed that it was not a question of wages alone which was operating so disadvantageously against this country and could, therefore, only be attributed to the greater aptitude of many of the foreign workmen and their intelligence which induced them to seize every opportunity of improving their manufactures by novelty of construction and excellence of make.

CHAPTER XLI.

1870.

The Birmingham Chamber was represented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Thomas Lloyd, Alfred Field, John S. Wright, F. Osler, and H. J. Harding (Secretary). In the previous year the first autumnal meeting had been held in Birmingham, and was declared to have been successful.

At this meeting Mr. J. S. Wright moved a resolution in favour of the establishment of a system of Registration of Trade Marks. He regretted that the Bill introduced by the Board of Trade in the previous session “ fell among the slaughtered innocents,” although it was unsatisfactory as it did not make registration absolutely necessary to the validity of a trade mark. He urged that if legislation was to be obtained it was essential it should be advocated with vigour.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

**Inequalities
of Railway
Rates.**

Mr. Wright then moved that the inequalities in the railway rates for the carriage of goods were such as to inflict great loss on many districts, and that the absence of all competition—especially where canals had been brought under the control of railway companies—rendered necessary some supervision of the rates allowed by law. He said that the importance of the question had increased, and that every year the railway companies were getting more and more power into their own hands and traders being “used simply for their special purposes and interest,” especially in the Midland district. On the coast railway companies would compete with shipping from port to port, making low rates, but in inland towns the rates were raised to compensate for small returns in the coast towns. The resolution was carried with one dissentient.

**Birmingham
Canal
Company.**

In the early part of 1870 the Birmingham Canal Co. promoted a Bill in Parliament containing a provision which injuriously affected the rates of carriage on coals and minerals coming into Birmingham. A special meeting of the Council was held on the 21st February, which was also attended by a number of leading manufacturers, when a letter was read from Mr. A. T. Becks, stating that the Canal Company burdened him with payments amounting to £525 more than if his works were out of Birmingham, and that the Bill, if passed, would add £147 to the charges. After consideration it was resolved that the enactment of the measure would be greatly injurious to the trade of the town; that a petition embodying the objections of the meeting be signed by the Chairman on behalf of the Chamber and by all inhabitants of the town willing to concur therein and be presented to the House of Lords; and that such further action be taken in opposing the Bill as might be deemed best by the Council. The following gentlemen were appointed a Committee to carry the resolution into effect, viz. :—Thomas Lloyd, Thos. Avery, J. B. Browett, C. D. Sturge, G. J. Johnson, J. S. Wright, G. H. M. Muntz, G. A. Muntz, Henry Elliott, A. Keep, G. Goodman, Jun., and A. T. Becks, and a subscription list was opened towards the expenses of the opposition.

In their annual report the Council pointed out that the rates on coal were exceptionally unjust to Birmingham,

seeing that outside the town there was a uniform rate of 3d. per ton for carriage whatever the distance, but that when delivered in the town the charge varied up to 1s. 5½d. —an excessive tax on manufacturers who depended so much upon cheap coal for the success of their trade, and which, added to the “necessary heavy rates” of the borough, tended to promote the erection of works at a distance “to the great detriment of the value of property and the prosperity of the town.” The Committee endeavoured to obtain a reduction in these inconsistent and excessive charges, but “the Canal Company, fearing to face the opposition, withdrew the toll clauses from their Bill and thus deprived the Council of a *locus standi* in opposing it.”

Life Assurance Companies having recently passed through troublous times, a Bill was introduced into Parliament for securing more reliable information as to their stability. The Council resolved that no Bill on the question would be complete and satisfactory to the public which did not include the following :—

Life
Assurance
Companies.

- (1) A clause prescribing what proportion of the assets of a company in the opinion of the Board of Trade (according to the actuarial experience of the duration of human life) would suffice to render Life Insurance Companies solvent.
- (2) That the character of such securities and statements of accounts should be published periodically, showing the details of such investments.
- (3) That an officer should be appointed by the Board of Trade with the necessary powers to compel all companies to comply with the above and any other conditions which might be prescribed by Act of Parliament.

In their annual report the Council stated that the Act passed required the publication of the accounts of Life Assurance Companies made out in a precise and regular mode, and provided for periodical investigation into their financial condition, and that an effectual check was put to amalgamation with other companies without the consent of the Court of Chancery and the almost unanimous consent of the policy-holders.

**The Royal
Mint.**

A paper entitled "Reports on the Mint," which contained a recommendation that the Royal Mint should undertake the coinage of moneys for foreign Governments was considered, and a memorial was sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer strongly protesting against the proposal that a Government department should enter into manufacturing pursuits in competition with private manufacturers.

Tax on Guns

The Chamber held a special meeting to consider a proposal by the Government to impose a tax on guns. The gunmakers had determined to petition the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the matter, and the Chairman said that as the gun trade was an important part of the trade of Birmingham, employing many thousands of hands, it was thought that the matter might very properly be taken cognizance of by the Chamber—the tax being one which was "very injudicious and inquisitorial," and would bear very hardly indeed upon the trade of the town. Mr. J. D. Goodman said the gun trade was exceedingly obliged to the Chamber for having taken up the subject, the more so that they had done this without solicitation. He added that the trade was very depressed. Mr. T. Weston, Mr. Glydon, and Mr. G. B. Lloyd spoke in favour of the tax, but it was ultimately agreed unanimously that a deputation from the Chamber should accompany the members of the gun trade to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge upon him the great desirability of modifying his proposals, which would affect the manufacture and sale of guns.

Public Clock.

The Council wrote to the Lord Mayor, calling his attention to the need that existed for a public clock to be placed in a prominent position in the town, which should register Greenwich mean time, and by a conspicuous signal indicate the hour of noon. At a subsequent meeting it was reported that the Mayor had brought the matter before the Town Council, who declined to discuss the question, and proceeded to the next business.

CHAPTER XLII.

1871.

The annual meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce was held in London on February 28th and March 1st and 2nd, 1871, when the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Thos. Lloyd, J. S. Wright, R. S. Bartleet, C. D. Sturge, and H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Mr. J. S. Wright, in again moving the resolution of the Chamber in favour of the establishment of a system of Registration of Trade Marks, said that hardly a month passed without finding "a larger and still larger" number of manufacturers adopting trade marks. The resolution was passed, with the following addition:—

"And that the Association, by memorial or deputation, urge Her Majesty's Government to introduce a Bill into Parliament to accomplish the object, and that a Committee be appointed (consisting of Mr. Wright, Birmingham, and Mr. Smith, Sheffield) to assist the Council in communicating with the Government on the subject, with power to prepare an independent Bill in case the Government failed to comply with the resolution of the Association."

It is interesting to record that the Chamber originated a movement in the Association for urging upon the Government the desirability of entering into Treaties for the protection of the names and trade marks of British manufacturers in foreign countries. Mr. R. S. Bartleet, on behalf of the Chamber, moved the following resolution at the Annual Meeting of the Association in 1871:—

"That in consequence of the injury sustained by British manufacturers through the counterfeiting of their names and trade marks by foreign manufacturers this meeting urges the importance of a clause being inserted in all future commercial treaties between Great Britain and other countries with whom no treaty already exists on the subject of trade marks giving protection to the names and trade marks of British

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

Treaties for
Protection of
Industrial
Property.

manufacturers; and that in the absence of any general negotiation on commercial subjects, it is desirable that steps should be taken by Her Majesty's Government to obtain a treaty on this subject with all the European and other nations without delay; and that a memorial embodying this resolution be presented by deputation to the President of the Board of Trade and also to the principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs."

In moving this resolution Mr. Bartleet referred to the numerous cases in which foreign manufacturers placed British trade marks on their inferior goods and their own on superior articles, and asserted not only that our goods were driven out of the market in consequence but our reputation also greatly injured. After some discussion the resolution was carried unanimously.

Birmingham
Canal
Company.

Complaint was made to the Council as to the action of the Birmingham Canal Company in requiring a rent for the use of their towing paths, and the opinion of Mr. Field, Q.C., and Mr. Alfred Wills was taken. They advised that the right undoubtedly given by the original Canal Act of 1767 was so entirely taken away by the Act of 1835 as to prevent any prescriptive right being vested in any person who had enjoyed it even from the date of the first Act. There was, however, another section of the Act of 1835 which provided in substance that where any wharf, quay, landing-place, crane, weighing machine, or warehouse was made on the side of the towing path with the special licence and consent of the Company, then the owner of such wharf, etc., might land goods over the towing paths. The term "special licence or consent" would exclude all licences arising simply from implication and would mean a formal licence under the seal of the Company, or, at least, a resolution or other act binding on the Company. It was reported that strong remonstrances had been made to the Canal Company "even by one of the Directors of the L. and N.-W. Ry. Co. against the movement."

Tax on
Matches.

The Council passed a resolution expressing their strong opposition to the duty proposed to be levied on matches, as contrary to the established commercial

policy of recent years, and likely to be a serious blow to those engaged in the manufacture of such articles.

A Bill for the establishment of Tribunals of Commerce in this country for the economical and speedy settlement of commercial disputes by a tribunal of commercial men associated with the Judge of a County or other local Court, was introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Whitwell, M.P., and the question was referred to a Select Committee, before whom Mr. C. H. Wagner and another member of the Council gave evidence. Mr. Wagner reported at some length on the evidence he gave. He stated that he did not agree with the plan laid down in the Bill for "mixed" tribunals, and that, in his opinion, the French and Belgian plan of excluding all legal element was preferable to the plan adopted at Hamburg, where the President of the Tribunal was a paid judge "by profession and education and a lawyer." He further explained that in the great majority of cases the questions to be decided would be commercial and not legal. Asked what he would say if before a purely commercial tribunal there arose a rather difficult question of law, he replied boldly that he would rather have merchants decide such a question from "the most common sense point of view they could take of it," though there might be some risk of such a decision not being in strict conformity with the law. He further insisted that Birmingham, with its manufactures of great and infinite variety, was more in want of a tribunal of commerce than any town in the world, adding that "when mentioning some of our trade customs and discount arrangements" he found at once the opportunity of convincing the Committee that in order to judge of our commercial differences or disputes it was necessary to be very familiar with the trade with which the district was connected. Some members of the Committee, Mr. Wagner stated in his report to the Council, thought that the arrangement of selling under such "wonderful discounts quite marvellous;" and that he then had to explain "how impossible it was to alter with every change in the price of raw materials the numberless prices of the articles affected by such alterations," whilst "raising or lowering of a rate of

Tribunals of
Commerce.

discount regulated at one stroke thousands and, perhaps, tens of thousands of price quotations." He further pointed out to the Committee the importance of empowering the tribunals to deal not only with the settlement of "disputes" but also with "questions" arising in commerce—a power the Bill did not give. On the question being put to him as to the possibility of finding proper persons to act as merchant judges and devote the necessary time to the office, Mr. Wagner pointed out to the Committee that all over England quite as much time was given gratuitously by men of high standing to matters, perhaps, not even of so much importance as were Tribunals of Commerce, and that he could not doubt for a moment that the position of a merchant judge would be regarded as a post of honour.

The
American
Treaty.

In their half-yearly report for this year the Council stated that it was a matter for congratulation that the friendly negotiations between the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and the United States had secured the adoption of a principle by which important questions betwixt them would be settled in a friendly manner. "There can be little doubt," the report concluded, "that this civilised and Christian mode of settlement will not only be the means of greatly increasing the amicable relations between two such great countries, but will also act as an example which will be more generally followed by other nations for the settlement of great international questions without appealing to the horrors of war."

Railway
Rates.

The following gentlemen were appointed as a Railway Rates Committee, viz. :—Messrs. Thomas Lloyd, John S. Wright, J. Saunders, Fredk. Ash, G. H. M. Muntz, Edmund Tonks, C. D. Sturge, J. Reynolds, and John Corbett. This Committee directed their attention to the rates charged on certain classes of goods (in which the Midland district was interested) as compared with the rates charged in other parts of the country, and it was found that considerable differences existed, "greatly adverse to the trade of this district." The co-operation of the Ironmasters' Association was invited with a view to complete the information required, and to impress upon the railway authorities the justice and expediency of a reduction of

the rates in force. The articles referred to were mainly coal and iron, and the Council reported that it was greatly to be regretted that that most important industry—"the iron trade"—was not maintaining its position in the Midland Counties, and that the "abundance of minerals and the local advantages for transport" which the Northern Counties enjoyed gave them the means of securing the principal portion of the business obtainable. In view of this the Council thought that the policy pursued by the "Great Railway Companies," who had monopolized nearly the whole of the carrying trade, was "very detrimental to the interests of the Staffordshire Iron and Coal Trades." The Council expressed the belief that the adoption of a more liberal policy by the Railway Companies would place local trade upon a more even footing with that of the north as to the cost of transit, and would involve no loss to the Railway Companies. They added that they believed "the companies would not resist combined pressure by the trading community.

Communications were received from the Home Office Thefts of
Metal. relating to the section of the Prevention of Crime Act of the previous session, by which the purchase by dealers in old metals and of metals and their alloys in quantities of less weight than 112lbs. or 56lbs. respectively, according to the description of metal, was rendered illegal, and subject to a heavy penalty. This section was directed against receivers of stolen metal, but the Council considered it to be oppressive on the legitimate trader, and, consequently, recommended its repeal. They recommended however, that in its place there should be inserted a provision assimilating the law relating to the possession in the provinces of metal supposed to be stolen or unlawfully obtained to the law in force relating to all kinds of property in the Metropolitan district, Liverpool, and the districts of the public dockyards, under which a person found in possession of anything which may reasonably be suspected of being stolen or unlawfully obtained, may be required to account for that possession to the satisfaction of a magistrate or be subject to fine or imprisonment.

State of
Trade.

In reporting upon the state of trade the Council said that it was very healthy. "This," they added, "has led to a general demand on the part of all classes of workmen for not only an increase of wages but a reduction of the hours of labour." The Council expressed the view, however, that whilst it was only just that the operatives should share the prosperity of their employers it was impossible to regard the numerous conflicts existing in different branches of trade between capital and labour without serious apprehension as to the ultimate effect on the manufacturing industries of the country. A hope was also expressed that it might be found possible to devise some means of preventing strikes, suspensions of labour, and the disturbance of that good feeling which ought to exist between employers and employed—"evils which, if continued, must inevitably be the means of transferring a considerable portion of our manufacturing trade to other countries."

CHAPTER XLIII.

1872.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd February, 1872, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, C. S. Hawkes, J. S. Wright, W. Williams, and H. J. Harding (Secretary). The Autumnal Meeting of the Association was held at Southampton on the 24th and 25th September, 1872, when the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, C. S. Hawkes, John S. Wright, R. S. Bartleet, and H. J. Harding (Secretary). No resolutions were moved by the Chamber at either of these meetings, although the delegates from Birmingham took a very active part on the discussions on proposals submitted by other Chambers.

Proposals were submitted to Parliament for the amalgamation of some of the most important lines of Railway, and on these being considered the Council passed a resolution to the effect that they regarded them with apprehension. It was decided to petition Parliament, praying that these amalgamations should not be permitted unless sufficient guarantees were provided for the protection of the public interest.

Railway
Amalgama-
tions.

A Joint Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament was appointed to hear evidence, and in one of their reports the Council expressed the hope that it would recommend an equalisation of rates of carriage, so that no district shall be favoured in this respect at the expense of others. The time had also arrived, they felt, when a separate department of Government should be organised to watch over the interests of the public and control more effectually the railway system of the kingdom in all its operations. In a subsequent report they stated that the Joint Select Committee had presented its report, but at too late a period in the session for any legislation to be initiated.

The Council reported that after an experience of nearly three years the Bankruptcy Act, 1869, remained, to a great extent, inoperative, owing mainly to the neglect by creditors of their own interests. "The same result," they added, "would necessarily follow under any system of Bankruptcy legislation; and so long as creditors neglect their duty in not investigating estates in which they are interested, the dishonest trader will find it easy to evade his liabilities." Proxies were obtained and compositions effected too readily by majorities, which the dissentient creditors had no chance of successfully opposing; and in too many cases it was found that absent and apathetic creditors had given their power into the hands of third parties to deal with as they thought proper and without adequate restriction as to their charges.

Bankruptcy
Act, 1869.

A letter was received from Mr. Nash asking for the support of the Chamber to his scheme of telegraphic money orders, and it was decided to inform him that whilst the Council approved of every additional facility

Telegraphic
Money
Orders.

which could be afforded by the Post Office, they were of opinion that at that time the authorities were "too burdened with work to recommend the scheme."

Local Board
of Concilia-
tion and
Arbitration.

The Council had under consideration the practicability of establishing a Local Board of Arbitration and Conciliation in connection with the various industries of the town. They carefully examined the constitution of the Boards established at Nottingham and Darlington upon a report by the Chairman (Mr. C. S. Hawkes), but found that as these had reference in their operation to one special industry, the constitution of a Board purposing to arbitrate in a variety of trades would require to be organised upon a more comprehensive basis. In consequence of this the Council decided to collect additional information on the subject before attempting to introduce a scheme suitable to local requirements, and hoped to have the co-operation and assistance of the manufacturers and workmen. "Fortunately," they added, "at the present moment, so far as we can learn, no serious interruption to the trade of the town is arising from disputes between employers and employed."

Railway
Warehouses.

The Council in this year received a deputation from the grocery trade in reference to a notice given by Railway and Canal Carriers to the effect that on and from 1st February, 1872, they would cease to "cellar or warehouse" goods for consignees, and Messrs. C. S. Hawkes, S. Booth, E. Tonks, and Ralph Heaton were appointed to confer with the carriers on the subject. At a subsequent meeting these gentlemen reported that the companies had withdrawn to some extent from the unsatisfactory position they had previously assumed.

French
Treaty of
Commerce.

In their first half-yearly report the Council regretted to state "that the anticipations expressed at the last meeting of the Chamber that the Government would not proceed to the extremity of withdrawing from the Treaty" (in connection with the negotiation of which the Chamber had rendered signal service to Her Majesty's Government) had not been realised, the French Government having given the stipulated twelve months notice of termination which would expire on February 1st, 1873. What the future duties would be upon the products of Birmingham

and District was yet unknown, but the Council feared they would be much higher than under the Treaty. "We may, however," the Council continued, "congratulate ourselves and the country at large that the British Government shows no indication of a desire to resort to any corresponding measure or to depart from a well-tryed policy of Free Trade." Subsequently a new Treaty was negotiated, the terms of which the Council thought were fairly satisfactory.

The Council had under consideration the question of the establishment of local bonded warehouses and information was sought, in the first place, from those members of the Chamber who were personally interested and subsequently from the public generally. There was, however, little active interest taken in the matter, although the Council said that, judging from the experience of Manchester, Bradford, and other inland towns, it might fairly be assumed that there was a specific advantage in possessing such warehouses. The Railway Companies had already made arrangements to warehouse exciseable goods, and the Council thought it probable that an extension of the system might be made to include all foreign goods which then paid import duties at the port of entry.

Referring to their previous statements as to the healthy state of trade, the Council stated that so rapid had "since been its development" that the usual relations between supply and demand had been disturbed in an inordinate degree, and it might be questioned whether the word "healthy" could be any longer applied. It was impossible to say, from the present indications, how long a period might elapse before the "inevitable reaction" took place, but the Council could not "too strongly recommend extreme prudence and caution to all concerned in large manufacturing or mercantile operations." These views were expressed with regard to the conditions in the first half of the year, but in reviewing the conditions in the second half the Council said that whilst the trade of the country at large might be considered fairly active and prosperous, it was impossible to regard the position of the Iron and Coal trades without serious apprehensions as to

Local
Bonded
Warehouses.

State of
Trade.

the ultimate results of the conflict between capital and labour. There appeared to the Council to be too much reason for believing that the exorbitant and frequent demands by workmen for higher wages were greatly stimulated by the inordinate desire for profit that actuated their employers at the beginning of the period of unusual activity, adding that it might safely be assumed that a more moderate use of their opportunity for advancing prices would have promoted a settled and profitable condition of trade without such violent variations as had since taken place. Concluding their report the Council said :—

“Until more reasonable counsels prevail in the minds of both masters and workmen, it is to be feared that no schemes of arbitration or other influences from without would succeed in preventing periodical disturbances of the relations between capital and labour which are now made dependent upon every fluctuation of the markets and the inevitable result of which will be great injury to the staple industries of the country.”

CHAPTER XLIV.

1873.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 18th, 19th, and 20th February, 1873, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. C. S. Hawkes (Chairman), Sampson S. Lloyd, P. H. Muntz, M.P., R. S. Bartleet, J. S. Wright, George Dixon, M.P., C. D. Sturge, and H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Bankruptcy
Law
Amendment.

At this meeting Mr. R. S. Bartleet moved, on behalf of the Chamber—

“That in no case shall Solicitors or Accountants engaged by the Bankrupt or Estate in Liquidation be allowed to hold proxies to vote at any meeting of the creditors.”

This motion was opposed on the ground that it would not be fair to take away from a creditor the right to give a proxy to whom he pleased, and on a vote by Chambers it was lost by 30 votes to 26. It was then proposed by another delegate (Mr. Hirst, of Leeds) that the practice which prevailed of allowing insolvents to appoint the accountant to whom their books were submitted and who were, therefore, generally chosen to wind up the estate, was unwise, and that a letter should be addressed to all the Chambers of Commerce, urging them to recommend strongly to their members "not to allow any accountant or attorney chosen by the insolvent to have any further concern in winding up the estate." This was carried unanimously.

At the same meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce Mr. Hawkes moved that the Government be requested to bring in a Bill during the ensuing session of Parliament "to provide facilities for the privileged registration of Trade Marks." Mr. Hirst, of Leeds, then asked whether Mr. Hawkes meant that the person who registered a trade mark should have "the privilege" over the man who did not, and Mr. Hawkes replied that he meant that it should be compulsory only so far as the exclusive use was concerned. Mr. Hirst then seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

Mr. Bartleet, at the same meeting, moved that children employed either in factories or workshops should be subject to the same regulations as regarded hours of labour and schooling, and on a vote by Chambers the resolution was carried only by 16 votes to 12, so that no action could be taken—a two-thirds majority being necessary.

Factory and
Workshops'
Act.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Cardiff on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th September, 1873, when Birmingham was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Ralph Heaton, R. S. Bartleet, and H. J. Harding (Secretary), Mr. Bartleet moved a resolution expressing dissatisfaction with the conclusions of the Select Committee on Imprisonment for Debt, 1873, that the power of imprisonment as then exercised by the County Court Judges

Imprison-
ment for
Debt.

should be abolished, and also expressing the opinion that no sufficient cause had been shown for any change in the law. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Factory Acts

Mr. Bartleet also moved that the Association take steps to obtain the abolition of surgical certificates under the Factory Acts—such certificates not being required under the Workshops Acts. He said the object of the certificate was two-fold : (1) to afford a check on the age of children and young persons ; and (2) to prevent them from engaging in occupations likely to be injurious to their health. As to the first, he said a certificate of birth would be a better requirement, and as to the second, he said it was not effective as owing to the discrimination between factories and workshops all the unhealthy children were driven into workshops to their serious detriment. Furthermore manufacturers paid £3,000 a year for certificates, whilst their competitors in workshops escaped. The resolution, however, was not carried.

Tribunals of Commerce.

A letter, enclosing a series of questions on the subject of Tribunals of Commerce, was received from the Royal Judicature Commission, and Messrs. C. S. Hawkes, C. D. Sturge, Henry Weiss, and C. H. Wagner were appointed a Committee to prepare the answers. These answers were subsequently prepared and adopted, and were broadly to the following effect :—(1) That Tribunals, consisting wholly of business men, should be established for the trial of all commercial cases, as they alone were properly qualified to decide commercial questions ; (2) That one member should form a quorum for the hearing, but that judgment should be given by three—a bare majority to be sufficient for the decision ; (3) That members of the Tribunals should be appointed according to the Paris plan from persons actually engaged in business, and without remuneration ; (4) That there should be a rota of members who should each serve for a definite period ; (5) That there would be no difficulty in getting business men to act, provided there was no remuneration ; (6) That in all cases above £50 there should be a right of appeal to a superior court on a question of law only ; (7) That litigants should be permitted to appear by agent, not being a solicitor or barrister ; (8) That the question of taking evidence in

public and on oath should be left at the option of the Tribunal; (9) That the Tribunal should have power to relax the ordinary rules of evidence; (10) That the Tribunals should be guided not only by the recognised rules of law and judicial decisions, but also by their own views of what was just in each particular case; (11) That whilst there might be a danger of uncertainty and conflicting decision, if Tribunals were established without having a code of commercial law as a guide, this would only be temporary and in the first stages; (12) That no change could be made in the existing courts which would render them equal in efficiency and expedition to the proposed Tribunals of Commerce; (13) That the Chamber had had experience of the administration of justice by Tribunals of Commerce in France, and had found them expeditious and inexpensive; (14) That the commercial community in France decidedly preferred Tribunals of Commerce to the ordinary Civil Courts, and had no desire whatever for their abolition.

A Railway and Canal Traffic Bill was introduced into Parliament, and Messrs. C. S. Hawkes, John S. Wright, C. D. Sturge, Ralph Heaton, and G. J. Johnson were appointed a Committee to watch its progress and take such action as might be necessary. This Committee proceeded vigorously with its work, and had the satisfaction of reporting that clauses to which it objected by petitions to the House of Lords and by deputations were negatived, and certain new clauses of which it approved added to the Bill, which ultimately passed into law. In the first half-yearly report the Council referred to the creation of a "special tribunal" for deciding all disputes relating to Railway and Canal Traffic, which was provided for in the Bill; and expressed the hope that a great deal of the abuse, delay, and litigation which formerly existed would be avoided. In their next half-yearly report the Council said they were glad to be able to state that the working of the Act promised to be of benefit to the trading and carrying community, and that already two important decisions had been given by the Commissioners in a much more speedy manner than under previous tribunals.

Railway and
Canal Traffic
Bill.

French
Treaty of
Commerce:

The Council had the satisfaction of reporting that the projected alterations in the duties on manufactured goods imported into France, and which had occupied their attention so much during the previous year, had happily been abandoned, and the Treaty of 1860 restored for four years with the additional advantage of a most favoured nation clause, which, "by some oversight," was omitted in the original. The Secretary of the Chamber, accompanied by Mr. H. L. Muller, went to Paris during the negotiations in order to point out to the Anglo-French Commission the "high compensatory duty" proposed to be levied on nickel when exported as an alloy of other metals as German silver. After putting themselves in communication with Mr. Kennedy, of the Foreign Office, they obtained an interview with M. Ozenne, the French Minister of Commerce, to whom they submitted a "case," written in the French language. In this they said that the article which was considered to be over-taxed was "nickel, pure or alloyed, with other metals, brass, or zinc (argentan), rolled or drawn," the duty on which was formerly 10 francs per 100 kilos, which it was proposed to alter to 65 francs per 100 kilos. This rate, they added, "would appear to be a protective duty, and, so to say, prohibitive, contrary to the stipulations and spirit of the Treaty, the object of which is to impose compensatory duties only." Continuing, they stated that the duty on pure nickel was formerly *nil*, and was then 50 francs per 100 kilos, and as German silver did "not contain more than from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. of pure nickel" the French manufacturer could obtain the materials to make 100 kilos of German silver at a rate of duty about one-fourth of what the English manufacturer would have to pay on the drawn or rolled German silver. A concrete instance was given of German silver which contained about 16 per cent. of pure nickel. For the raw material the French manufacturer would pay duty as follows:—

16 kilos nickel, at 50 francs	..	8.00 francs.
84 kilos brass, in ingots or bars, at		
.750 francs		6.30 francs.
Waste of material, 5 per cent.	..	0.70 francs.
		15.00 francs.

whilst the English manufacturer would have to pay 65 francs. When the French Minister of Commerce had studied the "case" he replied to Mr. Muller and the Secretary that the "framers" of the new scale of duty (not being practical men) could not be aware what percentage of nickle could be alloyed with German silver, and that they must have based their calculations upon the assumption that German silver "might be imported nearly all nickel." Mr. Muller, however, pointed out that an alloy containing no more than 30 per cent. would render the mixture so brittle that it would be useless in manipulation, and that in general production the alloy never exceeded 20 per cent. of nickel. The Minister of Commerce said he would check the statements made by consulting M. Christofle, and would then reply.

It appearing to the Council that some benefit would be derived by the manufacturing interests of Birmingham from a proper appreciation of the specimens of skill and industry on view at the Vienna Exhibition, it was decided to send a party of competent artisans for the purpose of examining and reporting upon such objects as had relation to the trade of this district. A fund of £200 was speedily arranged, and the Council despatched a Commission of ten men, representing various local industries, under the superintendence of Mr. W. C. Aitken. The visit was successfully accomplished, and the various reports of the Commission—fifteen in number—embraced: saddlery, gold, silver and electro-plate, jewellery, tape making, bells, brassfoundry, gas fittings, tinplate working, glass, buttons, guns, labour-saving machines, railway carriage and wagon building, and ironmongery, which were published in one volume. Unfortunately no copy of this volume is now available among the records of the Chamber, but it was evidently a very interesting and useful publication. Indeed, Sir John Packington afterwards said at Manchester that the reports constituted a most interesting volume, and declared in forcible and emphatic language the views of the writers, which all who took an interest in the manufactures of this country would do well to study, as showing the necessity for "technic instruction." He hoped they might be the means, at no distant date, of

Artisans'
Visit to
Vienna.

inducing whatever Government might be in power to extend the advantages of technical schools to the various industries of the country.

In a covering report Mr. W. C. Aitken said that the journey to Vienna occupied 96 hours, of which 72 were spent in actual travel, and that the examination of the various groups of exhibits involved "a very considerable amount of mere physical exertion in walking, which not a little interfered with the mental process of observation and note-taking." Much searching had to be done to find the various exhibits that had to be examined. No complete catalogue existed to aid the party in their search, and "the temperature of the building was high (oppressively so)." Nevertheless, Mr. Aitken thought that the reports, when published, would be found to be exceedingly valuable. He also expressed the opinion that in certain departments of Birmingham industry "producing articles of a practically useful kind" distinguished by good and substantial workmanship, there was every reason for supposing that such articles might be successfully introduced into the Austrian Empire.

Concluding his report Mr. Aitken said that the delegates were most kindly received by the representative of the English Commission, Philip Cunliffe Owen, Esq., and by him introduced to Baron Schwartz Senhorn, the chief Austrian Commissioner, "who most graciously received and thereafter liberally entertained them." Commenting upon the reports the Council said that the delegates, whilst maintaining the excellence of English manufactures, stated that the rates of wages paid to foreign artisans and other collateral elements which operated in enabling the manufacturers in other countries to compete, as regarded lowness of cost, with those of England, arose chiefly "from the superior intelligence of the artisans of competing countries, promoted by a national system of education terminating in industrial, scientific, and artistic instruction.

State of
Trade.

The Council reported that whilst the trade of Birmingham and District remained fairly active, it had to contend with difficulties arising from the enhanced price of labour and the exorbitant cost of fuel, the effect of

which was to divert a considerable portion of our trade to foreign countries. They added that the vast market of the United States was gradually becoming independent of this country for its supply of iron, and was even supplying British Colonies with this metal; indeed, it was reported that the "anomaly has recently been witnessed of an importation of iron from the United States into this country." Trade figures showed "in a remarkable degree our inability, under the present pressure of prices of fuel and labour, to compete with North America in the production of an article [railroad iron] which until recently was a special monopoly of this country." In a subsequent report the Council said :—

"It is much to be feared that while the enlightened policy of our legislature has been for years directed towards reducing all fiscal restrictions and impediments to free trade to a minimum, other restrictions and other impediments of a more oppressive nature have arisen and are daily arising, from the action of Trades Unions and similar combinations which constantly disturb the relations between capital and labour."

CHAPTER XLV.

1874.

Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., R. Heaton, C. S. Hawkes, S. Booth, R. S. Bartleet, J. S. Lloyd, and W. H. M. Blews were the Chamber's delegates to the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on March 17th, 18th and 19th, 1874—a month later than usual owing to the dissolution of Parliament by the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

**Bankruptcy
Law.**

A series of resolutions was moved indicating reforms believed to be necessary in the Bankruptcy Laws, and Mr. Booth, on behalf of Birmingham, moved an amendment :

“That this Association is of opinion that the Bankruptcy Act, 1869, has not been in operation a sufficient time to need amended legislation.”

The amendment was lost by 41 votes to 3.

Evidently the Council of the Chamber changed their mind before the close of the year, because, in December, 1874, we find them sending a communication to Chambers of Commerce pointing out that the composition and liquidation clauses of the Act of 1869 afforded dangerous facilities for and offered strong temptations to unjust and fraudulent arrangements with creditors. In the opinion of the Council also section 28 (2), by which a trustee might accept a composition by special resolution of a majority in number and three-fourths in value of creditors present did not give sufficient protection against fraud ; and some additional safeguards were necessary to protect the interests of creditors who might be unavoidably absent from the first meeting. Of the imperfections of the law the Council said they need only point out the large number of cases appearing daily in the public press, and it was, therefore, satisfactory to learn that the Lord Chancellor had appointed a special committee to consider whether, having regard to the experience obtained of the working of the Act, any and what changes, either through the medium of legislation or orders, might be advantageously made in the details of the system then in force.

**Workshops'
Act.**

At the Annual Meeting of the Associations referred to Mr. R. S. Bartleet returned to the question of the law relating to workshops, and, on behalf of the Chamber, moved a resolution to the effect that as employers of labour under the Workshops' Act had considerable advantages in obtaining a supply of labour over employers under the Factory Act, which caused great injustice to large manufacturers, especially in some of the districts where there was keen competition between them and small makers of the same articles ; and as some of the provisions of the Workshops' Act had a direct tendency to defeat the objects aimed at by the Factory Act, it was desirable that the

Workshops' Act should be assimilated to the Factory Act as far as was possible. Mr. Bartleet said it could not be just in the case of two employers in the same trade, one employing 49 hands and the other 50 that they should be under two separate Acts of Parliament very different indeed in their character, the employer of the 49 having great advantages in regard to hours and the absence of certain certificates over the other who employed one pair of hands more. The motion was carried by 24 votes to 5.

Mr. Ralph Heaton moved that "this Association re-affirms the following resolution passed at Cardiff:— 'That this Association memorialise the Post Office authorities urging the desirability of permitting prepaid replies to telegraphic messages to be sent at a cost of sixpence.' "

Telegraph
Charges.

The resolution was carried.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Heaton moved: "That this Association having further considered the abolition of imprisonment for debt as recommended by the Select Committee (1863) of the House of Commons, is confirmed in its opinion that such an alteration is not desirable, no sufficient cause having been shown for a change in the existing laws." In seconding, Mr. Booth said the title of the Government's Bill was a misnomer, and should have been "A Bill for the abolition of credit." To say, he added, that because men were called upon to satisfy their just liabilities they were subjected to a grievance was philanthropy gone mad. The resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority.

Imprison-
ment for
Debt.

Mr. S. Booth asked the Association again to express their strong approval of the establishment of a system of Registration of Partnerships, and to urge upon Her Majesty's Government the desirability of re-introducing the Bill which was placed before Parliament in the previous session. Mr. Booth's resolution was carried unanimously.

Registration
of Partner-
ship.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the 22nd and 23rd September, 1874, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. R. S. Bartleet, and Mr. H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

Mr. H. J. Harding moved, and it was resolved unanimously :—" That this Association views with great regret the difficulty experienced in passing through Parliament any measure of reform on commercial subjects ; and that a deputation be appointed to wait upon Her Majesty's Government before the ensuing session, and to urge the importance of re-introducing the Trade Marks' Registration Bill of 1872 as a Government measure." In the annual report of the Association for 1875 the Council congratulated themselves that after many years of earnest exertion an Act for the Registration of Trade Marks had been passed. The principle, of which the Birmingham Chamber were the pioneers, that the Act should be compulsory was conceded.

Worcester
and
Birmingham
Canal.

In their first half-yearly report for this year the Council stated that they had very carefully examined the Bill for the transfer of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal to the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal Company. At the request of the Council " important modifications were made in the proposed maximum rates on coal, minerals, and heavy goods." As the promoters of the measure were anxious to make it as equitable as possible between the public and themselves the Council gave evidence, through Mr. Ralph Heaton, in favour of the purchase. The Bill became law, and the Council said :—" A continuous waterway in the hands of one company, anxious to develop traffic, now exists between Birmingham, South Staffordshire, and the Bristol Channel." The anticipated opening of the extension docks at Sharpness Point, in connection with the route, would, it was thought, greatly increase and facilitate the carrying accommodation of the Company, but the Council continued :—

" Your Council hope that, at no distant date, the long-thought of project of a Ship Canal between Birmingham and the Severn may assume a practicable shape and be ultimately carried out."

Truly the wheels of canal development grind slowly !

Corporation
Gasworks
and
Waterworks.

The contemplated purchase by the Corporation of the local Gasworks was considered by the Council, who appointed a Committee, consisting of Mr. S. Booth, Mr. C. S. Hawkes, and Mr. W. H. M. Blews, to watch its

progress, with the view of protecting the interests of consumers. The preamble of the Bill was, however, not proved. Subsequently the Corporation gave notice for the compulsory purchase of both gas works and water works, and the Committee was requested carefully to watch the progress of both Bills.

The terms of a projected Treaty of Reciprocity between Canada and the United States were considered, and were found to be so unfavourable to the manufacturers of this country that the Council joined in a deputation to Earl Derby and Earl Carnarvon (Foreign and Colonial Secretaries respectively). From these the deputation had the satisfaction of an assurance that no differential duties as against this country would be imposed by the Dominion of Canada.

In their first half-yearly report the Council regretted to observe that considerable depression existed in some branches of the trade of the town and district, although they considered it a necessary consequence of the inevitable reaction from a state of exceptional activity to the "more usual conditions of supply and demand," and also of the continued high prices of many staple products. Continuing, the Council congratulated the Chamber on the termination of the long and disastrous strike of the colliers of the district, and on the fact that the men had resumed work at the rate of wages offered them by their employers. They also expressed their sense of the valuable aid rendered by the Mayor (Mr. Joseph Chamberlain) in bringing about this desirable result; and urged upon the Chamber the use of all means in their power to promote harmonious relations between masters and men, so as to check, if possible, the foreign competition from which they were suffering so severely, and which had been greatly stimulated by high prices rendered necessary by the demand for larger profits, higher wages, and decreased hours of labour. In their next half-yearly report the Council said there was, unfortunately, only too much evidence that much of our metallic trades was being driven to foreign countries owing to the unhealthy inflation of prices and disturbed relations between capital and labour.

Reciprocity
between
Canada and
United
States.

State of
Trade.

CHAPTER XLVI.

1875.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held at London on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th February, 1875, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., P. H. Muntz, M.P., C. S. Hawkes, C. D. Sturge, R. Heaton, J. S. Wright, and H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Arrange-
ments
between
Railway
Companies.

Mr. C. D. Sturge, on behalf of the Chamber, asked the Association to agree to the following resolution:—
“That agreements between Railway Companies for preventing the reduction of rates in future years (such as those attached to the Great Western Amalgamation Act of 1863) are injurious to the trade of the country and should not receive the confirmation of Parliament.”

Attached to the Act referred to were a number of agreements with other Companies, the principal being with the London and North-Western and the Midland, by which the Companies were for ever prevented from lowering rates common to more than one, unless all the parties named agreed to the agreement respecting the reduction. Mr. Sturge's individual experience—which has more than once been confirmed during the past forty years, was that when there was only one Company to deal with (*i.e.*, in competition with another) this Company was generally open to reason; whilst, when the consent of three or more was requisite, one or other was sure to refuse to agree, so that, practically speaking, the rates of carriage were permanently kept up to a certain level, and no reductions were possible. The resolution was carried on a show of hands.

Official
Export
Returns

Mr. C. S. Hawkes moved at the same meeting a resolution in regard to the Returns of the Export Trade of Foreign Countries, which was ultimately adopted in the following terms:—

“That this Association is of opinion that official returns of the export of the principal manufacturers of foreign countries to other foreign countries, British Colonies and Dependencies, would be of great value to British manufacturers, and that a deputation be appointed to wait upon the Board of Trade asking for the collection and publication of these statistics in conjunction with the statistical abstract of the United Kingdom.”

Mr. Harding, on behalf of the Chamber, moved :— Bills of Sale.

“That experience having shown that the operation of Bills of Sale is in the majority of cases fraudulent and injurious to the trading community, besides being the worst form of preferential security, this Association is of opinion that they should be abolished, and that a deputation be appointed to wait upon the Lord Chancellor, with a view of obtaining his consent to the introduction of a Bill to carry out the above resolution.”

It is undoubted that there were serious evils to be remedied in regard to Bills of Sale, but, from the animated debate which followed the moving of the above resolution, it seems clear that the Birmingham resolution was too drastic a remedy. On being put to the vote there was a majority against it, but it was unanimously resolved that the subject of Bills of Sale be taken into consideration by the Council (*i.e.*, of the Association), with a view to suggesting considerable amendments in the law regarding them or else of advocating their entire abolition.

At the same meeting of the Association Mr. Ralph Heaton moved “That considering the absolute dependence of the commerce of the country on its railway system and the dissatisfaction generally felt in numerous manufacturing districts at the inequality of treatment experienced at the hands of the Railway Companies in charging unfair and disproportionate rates of carriage, this Association is of opinion that the time has arrived for an impartial Government inquiry by Royal Commission, or otherwise, as to the expediency or practicability of the purchase and management by the State of the various Railways of the United Kingdom.” Railway Management In the course of

his speech in support of this resolution Mr. Heaton said that formerly, if a modification of charges were required, they had to go to only one Company, but now the matter was much more complicated, as they had, perhaps, to induce two or three Railway Companies, and, possibly, one or more Canal Companies, before any redress of grievances could be obtained. He added that under the then existing inequalities some districts were made to suffer for the advantages which were granted to others. Mr. Heaton referred in a quite apologetic way to the latter part of the resolution regarding the acquisition of the Railways by the State, and after a somewhat vigorous discussion, accepted a suggestion by Mr. Whitwell, M.P., that the latter words of the resolution should be omitted, and an expression substituted that the time had arrived for provision to be made by Parliament "enabling individual traders to apply for relief to the newly-appointed Railway Commission." With an alteration to this effect the resolution was carried unanimously.

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

The Autumnal Meeting of the Association was held at Leeds on the 21st and 22nd September, 1875, the Chamber being represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., J. S. Wright, and H. J. Harding (Secretary), when the only resolution moved by Birmingham was to the effect that the Association noted with great regret the withdrawal of the Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill, and urged upon the Government the need for its early reintroduction in the following session. This resolution was carried unanimously.

New York
Board of
Trade.

Certain resolutions were received from the New York Board of Trade, and Messrs. A. Field, C. S. Hawkes, and J. S. Wright, were appointed to prepare a reply. This was subsequently submitted to the Council and adopted. In the reply it was stated that the commercial men of this country had long been amazed that the American people could so long and patiently bear a tariff such as that which then existed in the United States, "the avowed principles of which were the heavy taxation of the whole people for the purpose of creating exorbitant profits for a few manufacturers, the income received into the Public Treasury being very much less than would be obtained

from moderate import duties." It was added that where goods were kept out by "an enormous protective duty" no revenue could be received from their import. "It appears to us here," the letter continued, "that the so-called protection of native industry should properly be called misdirection, as it consists in diverting by the force of legislation the industry of the country from occupations in which it would be more profitable to those in which it is less so, the difference being made up by a heavy weight of taxation placed on the shoulders of the great body of consumers in the country." The Chamber added that they were not astonished to learn from the resolutions of the New York Board of Trade that such a system of high protection had brought about in the United States, an extensive practice of smuggling with all its demoralizing effects on the dealers in imported goods, and the injury such a practice inflicts on honest importers. They entirely believed that the New York Board was correct in thinking that there was no effective way of suppressing this smuggling, but the substitution of a moderate tariff for the then existing protective system. "The manufacturers of America," the Chamber's communication continued, "depend for their success on the undoubted great ingenuity and industry of her people (*sic*), and they will increase and extend whether the tariff legislation of the country is wise or unwise. But a more moderate revenue tariff, by reducing the expenses of manufacturing will much more promote their extension than the present protective system. Some manufactures that never ought to have been established may possibly cease, but many more will be greatly extended and their productions will be exported to all the quarters of the globe."

Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, who was still a member of the Council of the Chamber, had a motion before the House of Commons in favour of the appointment of a Minister of Commerce, and the Council decided to present a petition in favour of the proposal.

At a late period of the session the Government introduced, for the first time, a Bill for the compulsory Registration of Trade Marks, a measure which had long

Minister of
Commerce.

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

been advocated by the Chamber, both direct and through the Association of Chambers of Commerce. This Bill passed through all its stages with great rapidity, and became law during the session, thus establishing a system which it was contended would and has, indeed, become of inestimable benefit to the country

Patents Bill.

A Bill with reference to Patents for Inventions was introduced during the session, and the Chamber at once appointed a special committee to examine its provisions. On their report it was decided to petition in its favour, subject to certain alterations which were deemed to be necessary. These alterations included a reduction of fees and a provision that with respect to all patents granted to foreigners, if the patentee did not work it in England it should be compulsory on him to grant licences to English manufacturers if applied for.

Factories and Workshops' Acts.

The Factories' and Workshops' Act Commission visited Birmingham in June, 1875, to collect evidence, and the Council of the Chamber gave evidence before it to the following effect :—

- (a) That the working hours be 7 to 7 or 6 to 6.
- (b) That no child should be permitted to work under ten years of age.
- (c) That as regarded the employment of young persons between 13 and 18 years of age the age of 16 should be substituted for males.
- (d) That the clause which proposed further to restrict the employment of children on Saturday was unnecessary and would be very injurious.

Many other points were mentioned in evidence, but those mentioned above sufficiently indicate the general feeling about forty years ago, when the country was beginning to experience the seriousness of foreign competition.

State of Trade.

In reviewing the course of trade during this year the Council found it impossible to avoid the conviction that the apprehensions expressed by them during a period of exceptional prosperity had been more than verified, and that there was reason to fear that the losses since incurred in the coal and iron trades would more than counter-balance the profits that arose from the forced and

inflated state of commerce three years previously. The relations between capital and labour had been so completely disorganised that "recovery to a just equilibrium" could be obtained only by a long and painful process of disputes, mutual recriminations and loss, whilst the portentous fact was daily becoming more apparent that, notwithstanding the losses then being incurred by the producers in some of the staple trades of the district, arising from excessive wages, short hours, irregular employment, the foreigner was successfully competing in many of the principal markets of the world, and rapidly destroying the industrial supremacy for which this country had so long been renowned. In their half-yearly report the Council added :—

"It will, perhaps, scarcely be credited in the latter part of the nineteenth century that in certain trades of this district skilled workmen can and do combine to exclude apprentices or others who might learn the same handicraft as themselves, while their employers appear to be powerless to prevent this monstrous abuse of the privilege of combination ! Such things involve the future extinction of trades, and your Council cannot but hope that a sense of self-preservation must shortly come to the assistance of both employer and employed and produce a more sensible and healthy condition of their mutual relations."

For some time previously it appears from the Council's report, a large part of the legitimate commerce of the country had been rendered unprofitable and even disastrous by the enormous operations of insolvent traders, and the revelations which had taken place showed to what an alarming extent the easy abuse of credit had attained. The sound portion of the commercial community, using its own capital and credit with due caution were, it was said, powerless to meet the competition of those who had nothing to lose but the money of others who were weak enough to lend it to them. Whilst the Council were glad that the commercial storm which burst in June, 1875, had cleared the atmosphere for a time—although at the cost of many millions, they could not pass over the subject without

expressing an opinion that grave moral responsibility rested upon those Banks and Institutes of credit which had employed the funds entrusted to their care in supporting a system of trade manifestly unsound.

CHAPTER XLVII.

1876.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 15th, 16th, and 17th February, 1876, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. P. H. Muntz, M.P., Mr. John S. Wright, Mr. W. H. M. Blews, Mr. Arthur Keen, and Mr. H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Post Office
Money
Orders.

Mr. John S. Wright, on behalf of the Chamber, moved a resolution to the effect that the Association urge upon the Postmaster-General the great importance of simplifying the money-order system then in vogue, and, as far as possible, adopting the scheme of the cheque bank. The suggestion was that parties, without giving their names or where they lived, might receive cheques which they could send away at their discretion. Mr. Wright admitted that of course such a system would have to be of a limited character, or bankers would complain that it interfered with their business. "It would be a great convenience," he said, "that if he were able to go to the Birmingham Post Office and pay £10; receive in return say three cheques for £2 and four for £1, and, if when he had used them, a small balance was left, it could be carried on towards another cheque." On a show of hands the motion was lost, and on a vote by Chambers there were 20 votes for and 13 against, but the majority was not sufficient for the Executive Council to take action upon.

Bills of Sale.

The representatives of the Chamber also submitted to the Association the following series of resolutions:—

“That in the opinion of this Association any law regulating Bills of Sale greatly requires amendment. That the following points are *desiderata* in the measure for amending the said law :—

- “1. That every Bill of Sale shall be registered within seven days from the making thereof, and otherwise shall be null and void against all persons whatsoever except the maker of such Bill of Sale.”
- “2. That any subsequent Bill of Sale executed in consideration of, or to secure, the same debt, money’s worth, or any part thereof, shall be null and void as against all persons, and to the same extent as the former Bill of Sale shall be null and void.”
- “3. That there shall be filed with the Clerk of the Docquets, within seven days after such Bill of Sale is made, a statement which shall be entered at once in a minute book to be kept by him (such book to be open to public inspection for the fee of one shilling), showing :—
 - (a) Date of each Bill of Sale.
 - (b) Date when filed.
 - (c) Amount for which it is given and for which judgment under it may be signed.
 - (d) Names in full, description or occupation and residences particularly described of every grantor and grantee of each such Bill of Sale.”
- “4. That no Bill of Sale shall be valid unless executed in the presence of the solicitor to the grantor.”
- “5. That mortgages (legal or equitable) of premises containing fixed machinery, *i.e.* :
 - (a) Motive powers, such as boilers, steam engines, water wheels, donkey engines.
 - (b) Machinery for transmitting power such as shafts, drums, wheels, and their fixed appurtenances.
 - (c) Pipes for steam, gas, or water, within the buildings on the said premises,
 shall be valid (as respects such fixed machinery as well as respects such premises) against all assignees or trustees of the estate of the mortgagor, and also

against all execution by the Sheriff under judgments of any Court of Law or Equity—without registration under the Bills of Sale Act, 17 and 18 Vic. cap. 36, or under the proposed new Act, and thus, whether the premises so mortgaged are freehold, leasehold, or copyhold (unless the contrary intention be distinctly expressed in the mortgage deed or writing).”

- “6. That a memorial be addressed to the Lord Chancellor in accordance with the above, and petitions to both Houses of Parliament at the discretion of the Executive Council.”

Resolutions Nos. 1 and 2 were carried after some discussion. No. 3 was withdrawn as there was no “Clerk of the Docquets.” No. 4 was carried. No. 5 was withdrawn, and No. 6 was adopted.

Trade Marks
Rules.

Mr. H. J. Harding then moved the following resolution :—

“That a deputation of this Association present a memorial to the Lord Chancellor calling attention to the desirability of making certain alterations in the trade mark rules.

“1. In the classification of goods in the first schedule.”

“2. In the fees in the second schedule in order to provide that where any firm requires the use of more than two marks, the fee for each mark after the first shall be as follows :—On application to register each additional mark at at the same time after the second, 5s. ; on registration, including certificate, ditto, 5s. ; that the fee No. 4 for registration shall in all cases include a certificate of same ; and that fee No. 14 shall be only for every additional certificate that may be applied for in connection with any registered mark and that it be reduced from 20s. to 10s.”

The motion was agreed to without discussion.

Imperial
Taxation.

At the same meeting of the Association Mr. John S. Wright moved :—

“That Local and Imperial Taxation, where their incidence is concurrent, should have a common basis

of valuation ; that both Local and Imperial Taxation should be assessed on the net rental or annual value of real property ; that Imperial Taxation when levied on industrial or professional earnings should be subject to such abatement as may equitably adjust the burden thrown upon intelligence and skill as compared with the burden thrown upon property ; that a petition be presented to the House of Commons, and a memorial addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by this Association in accordance with these views."

The resolutions were carried substantially in the form in which they were proposed.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Bristol on the 12th and 13th September, 1876, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., John S. Wright, S. Booth, and H. J. Harding (Secretary), but no resolutions were moved thereat by the Birmingham delegates.

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

During the session of 1876 the Lord Chancellor introduced a comprehensive scheme of Bankruptcy Reform, but at so late a period as to take away any chance of its becoming law. In their annual report, after referring to this measure, the Council of the Chamber said that the Act of 1869 (in the formation of which the Council had taken so active a part) was framed upon the principle of giving the creditor a large control over insolvent estates, under the belief that self interest would ensure the utmost care and promptitude in realising and distributing the assets in the quickest and most economical manner. But, the Council added, "The result of seven years' experience has, however, shown that creditors are too supine or too busy to bestow the necessary time and trouble, and estates drift into the slow and expensive administration of accountants and solicitors," and they were of opinion that some other principle should be sought as the basis of any new legislation. They expressed the view that the Lord Chancellor's measure appeared to be designed to protect creditors against their own carelessness in looking after estates in which they were interested

Bankruptcy
Law
Reform.

**Crossed
Cheques Act.**

A Bill relating to Crossed Cheques was introduced into Parliament during this session, and a petition in its favour presented on behalf of the Chamber to the House of Commons through the President, Mr. George Dixon, M.P. An alteration of the law had become necessary owing to a judicial decision throwing doubt upon the security of crossed cheques when getting into the hands of third parties who might be innocent holders. With some amendments the Bill became law, and, finally, determined the value of crossing cheques and also created a new form of crossing, which, the Council stated, would effectually prevent loss in the transmission of "these documents." The Act was regarded to be of so much importance that the full text of it was given in the annual report of the Council, who stated that:—

"The new form of crossing 'not negotiable' if used upon cheques forwarded by post, will entirely remove all danger of loss, though both the sender and receiver of these documents ought to be aware that such cheques can only be cashed through a banker in whose favour they are drawn."

Patents Bill.

During the session the Lord Chancellor introduced a Patents Bill, with provisions similar to that introduced the previous year. It did not, however, include the provisions advocated by the Chamber, and the matter was, therefore, referred to a Sub-Committee, and certain members of the Chamber, who appointed a deputation to wait upon the Solicitor-General. The latter promised that the suggestions should be carefully considered, but ultimately the Bill was withdrawn.

**French
Treaty of
Commerce.**

During this year M.M. Duval and Balsan visited England for the purpose of making inquiries on matters relating to commerce between Great Britain and France. These gentlemen were members of the Conseil Supérieur du Commerce—a Committee appointed by the French Government to examine and report upon commercial questions. They had every facility afforded them for visiting the chief centres of industry and making such inquiry as they deemed needful for a comparison of the cost of production of British manufactures with those of their own. It subsequently appeared that it would be

advisable if similar information respecting French industries could be obtained, as such information would (it was thought) afford a more secure basis for the Treaty then under negotiation. A correspondence accordingly took place between the Association of Chambers of Commerce and the Foreign Office on the subject, when Lord Derby offered every assistance to any delegates who might be appointed. The Council appointed Mr. C. H. Wagner, who acted in the preparation of the Treaty of 1860, and who was "thoroughly well acquainted with the subject" to represent the Chamber as regarded the hardware trades. Mr. Wagner's health, unfortunately, prevented his accepting the invitation, and the Council accordingly acted in conjunction with the Sheffield Chamber, which was similarly interested, and Mr. F. Brittain, of Sheffield, acted for both Chambers.

In October, 1876, Mr. King, Surveyor on behalf of Canal Messrs. Burchells, of Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, Communication. London, attended a meeting of the Council, with a view to enlist the support of the Chamber in promoting a scheme for an extension of the Canal System from Birmingham and the Oxford and Coventry Canals into the Leicestershire district by way of Polesworth and Shacklestone. After careful enquiry into the merits of the scheme and finding that such an extension would be beneficial to the community, the Council decided to support it, and a meeting of those residing in the district—coal proprietors and others—was subsequently held in London, at which resolutions were passed approving of the project. Subject to the preliminary expenses being provided, it was decided to introduce a Bill, but owing to the late period of the year there was not sufficient time to issue the necessary Parliamentary notices. The Council, nevertheless, expressed the opinion that by placing the town in more direct water communication with the adjacent coal-fields, great delay and expense would be saved to the public, whilst the carrying monopoly then in the hands of the Railway Companies would be diminished.

The Council, in their annual report, were unable to State of report any relief from the depression which the important Trade.

staple trades and also the general industries of the town and district were suffering. They added :—" It must, however, be remembered that recurring periods of activity and dulness have been the experience of many years, and if the present depression is of longer duration and greater severity than usual, it is due to causes that it is to be hoped may be proved exceptional." Among these causes there was mentioned the " inevitable reaction from the Franco-German War "—the partial withdrawal of two great nations for several years from their usual mercantile and manufacturing industries having thrown an enormously increased demand on the producing powers of this country. It was also stated that the inflation of the prices of all material and labour which necessarily followed, affecting especially the great staples of coal and iron and the disorganisation of the relations between labour and capital—resulting, as it did, in frequent strikes, in reduced hours of labour and in decreased production, so enhanced the price of all kinds of goods that it had the effect of " stimulating to the utmost the development of the mineral resources and manufacturing capabilities of other countries and converting our customers into rivals and competitors." After quoting Board of Trade figures with regard to foreign and colonial trade, the Council stated that they saw but one mode of recovering " our former position " and competing successfully with " the recent rapid development " of the manufacturing energies of other countries, and that was by returning to the " former habits of untiring industry, excellence of workmanship, and soundness of material upon which the former superiority of the country was based, and which it was felt was the only true foundation of national prosperity, and could only be rendered permanent by " moderate profits, reasonable wages, fair hours of labour and conscientious work."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

1877.

Mr. J. S. Wright, Mr. R. S. Bartleet, Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. C. D. Sturge, and Mr. H. J. Harding (Secretary), attended as the delegates of the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd February, 1877. Association of Chambers of Commerce

At this meeting of the Association Mr. Bartleet, on behalf of the Chamber, submitted a motion to the effect that a memorial should be presented to the President of the Local Government Board, pointing out the injustice that arose from the different action of Assessment Committees in regard to the method of assessing property, and that some definite instruction should be given by the Board to such Committee as to the principle to be adopted, and, further, that the Association considered that machinery ought not to be assessed. On the proposition of Mr. Whitwell, M.P., an amendment was carried requesting the Executive Council to watch the new Valuation Bill introduced by the Government and to obtain the inclusion of a clause declaring that movable machinery should not be rateable for local taxation. Rating of Machinery.

Mr. H. J. Harding, at the same meeting, moved a resolution that the Association send a memorial to the Lord Chancellor and the Commissioners of Patents directing their attention to the importance of adopting certain proposals for the promotion of the convenience of inventors and the public generally in connection with references in the Library of Patents. These proposals included the creation of an index giving an exact knowledge of the contents of the Patents issued under the old law (1617 to 1852) on the lines adopted in the indexes of 1874 and 1875; the revision and bringing up to date of the classified abridgments; and the "resuming" of the publication of abridgments of current patents in chronological order. The resolution was carried unanimously. Patent Office

Patents for
Invention
Bill.

Mr. Bartleet proposed a resolution on the subject of the Bill then before Parliament for amending the law regarding patents for inventions, expressing satisfaction with the various amendments proposed, and suggesting certain additions including the following :—

“ If a patent be granted to a colonist or foreigner—unless he manufactures the article patented in Great Britain—he shall, on application to the Lord Chancellor at any time after the expiration of six months from the date of the patent, be required to grant licences to proper persons requesting the same on terms which the Lord Chancellor deems reasonable.

At the suggestion of the Chairman (Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd), the matter was referred to the Executive Council.

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held at Hull, Birmingham was represented by Mr. John S. Wright, Mr. R. S. Bartleet, and Mr. H. J. Harding (Secretary).

Post Office
Money
Orders.

At this meeting Mr. John S. Wright moved that the Association approve of the principle of the Post Office Money Orders Bill introduced by the Government in the previous session. He pointed out that the money order system then in existence was commenced in 1838, and that it had grown from 200,000 orders issued for £300,000 to 16,500,000 millions of orders issued for an aggregate sum of £27,500,000 in 1875. The proposal of the Birmingham Chamber was that there should be issued postal orders for 2/6, 5/-, 10/-, and 20/-, and that these might be made payable to bearer, to order, or crossed and made payable only through any particular banker, subject to this, that they might be made payable in any particular town, or left open so that the bearer might receive the money at any time out of the 5,000 money-order offices in the United Kingdom. After an animated debate the motion was, by leave, withdrawn. It is only fair to say that subsequently the proposal of the Birmingham Chamber was accepted by the General Post Office.

Bankruptcy
Law Reform

During the session of 1877 the Government introduced a Bill for consolidating the Law of Bankruptcy, which was withdrawn owing to the pressure of public business, i.e., business of a party political character. A similar

fate befell a Bill introduced by the Association of Chambers of Commerce for amending the Bankruptcy Act, 1869, to which the Council of the Chamber gave its hearty support—believing that the then existing law only required amendment in various points and that the introduction of a completely new measure was unnecessary. In their annual report the Council of the Chamber expressed the opinion that unless strong measures were taken to check reckless trading and compel the payment of a fixed sum in the £ before allowing a re-commencement of business no new legislation would meet the difficulties caused by cheapness of credit and keenness of trade competition.

In October, 1877, the various Railway Companies gave notice of their intention to increase their goods rates on weights from 1cwt. to 500lbs., though, at the same time, reducing the rate on parcels under 1cwt. A Special Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. S. Booth, Mr. Arthur Keen, and Mr. Sam Timmins, was appointed to deal with the matter, and this Sub-Committee subsequently had an interview with the District Goods Managers, as a result of which they felt that further steps should be taken to simplify the law of procedure on the matter.

Railway
Rates for
Smalls.

During this year the Council considered the Treaties of Commerce of France, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland, but found that there was little disposition shown to establish more liberal tariffs. After pointing out how detrimental to our interests certain duties would be, the Council said that

Foreign
Treaties of
Commerce.

“the effect of such restrictions on the exportation of English manufactures to nations whose goods and produce are admitted almost free into this country, has created considerable discussion in commercial circles as to the wisdom of our free trade policy. Your Council, however, firmly believe that an experience of 35 years of free trade has demonstrated its value to this country.”

It is clear, from this quotation, that the Council in that day were able more freely to dilate upon the fiscal policy of the country than would be possible in 1913, when

State of
Trade.

the question is one of acute party politics which the Chamber is by its Articles of Association compelled to shut out of its deliberations.

The Council reported that there had been no improvement in trade since the previous year ; that the depression had been great and almost universal ; and that probably few years during the generation had opened with so gloomy a prospect. The pessimistic view of the Council went still further, for they expressed the fear that the worst had not been reached. The causes were put down to a succession of bad harvests, the Franco-German War, which, it was said, had produced unparalleled loss and injury to innocent non-combatants, and the effect of the latter in "utterly disorganising and destroying trade." It was added that this country had not to any considerable extent, as on former occasions, supplied to either combatant the arms or munitions of war.

CHAPTER XLIX.

1878.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., John S. Wright, R. S. Bartleet, and S. Timmins.

Patent Laws

Mr. J. S. Wright moved a resolution to the effect that any Bill for the revision of the Patent Laws should provide for a considerable reduction in fees ; that any preliminary examination should not go further than the point of novelty ; that no patent should be granted to foreigners unless with the condition that licences be given to manufacturers in England ; and that provision should be made for cases of infringement being brought before a local magistrate as provided by the Merchandise Marks Act, 1872. This resolution provoked an animated discussion,

a delegate from Greenock urging the entire abolition of the Patent Laws, whilst one from Huddersfield did not see how the Government could enforce the condition as to compulsory licences. Ultimately, however, the resolution was carried unanimously, thus confirming the policy previously advocated by the Association.

At the same meeting Mr. R. S. Bartleet, on behalf of Birmingham, moved :—

Local and
Imperial
Taxation.

“(1) That Local and Imperial Taxation, where their incidence is concurrent, should have a common basis of valuation.”

“(2) That both Local and Imperial Taxation should be assessed on the net rental or annual value of real property.”

“(3) That Imperial Taxation, when levied on industrial and professional earnings should be subject to such abatement as may equitably adjust the burden thereon upon intelligence and skill as compared with the burden thrown upon property.”

“(4) That a petition be presented to the House of Commons and a memorial addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by this Association in accordance with these views.”

The resolutions were put *en bloc* and carried by a large majority—two hands only being held up against it.

The Birmingham Chamber had also given notice to move a resolution stating “That this Association, after an experience of 35 years of the advantages of free trade, expresses its undiminished confidence in its principles, and urges upon the Government faithful adherence to the same policy irrespective of the action of foreign nations as regards tariffs and import duties.” Mr. John S. Wright withdrew it, but Mr. Hirst (of Leeds) moved it as an amendment to a Derby resolution, which, whilst expressing full approval of the principles of free trade, urged upon the Government the inadvisability of signing treaties of commerce with those foreign nations which had imposed or intended to impose higher import duties upon English manufactures than those which then existed, or which excluded Great Britain from the most favoured nation

Free Trade.

clause. It is clear from the discussion that fiscal policy was not at that time a party question in the sense in which we now understand it, and that the Association was therefore free to discuss it unreservedly. Mr. Hirst subsequently withdrew the drastic amendment, and the Derby resolution was carried with a slight amendment—the words relating to higher import duties being omitted.

Spanish
Tariff.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association it was resolved unanimously upon the proposition of the Birmingham Chamber—

“That this Association regrets the action of the Spanish Government in imposing on goods of English manufacture higher duties than upon those of other countries, and respectfully urges upon Her Majesty’s Government to take such action as may, if possible, induce the Government of Spain to redress such inequalities and admit English goods under the most favoured nation tariff.”

Weights and
Measures
Act.

The Chamber expressed its approval of the weights and Measures Act, 1878, which they thought would be found exceedingly useful and greatly simplify dealings in all kinds of produce and merchandise. Later in the year the Council passed a resolution that the introduction of the cental—being a multiple of the Imperial pound—in the schedule of the Act would be of great convenience to the mercantile community.

Portuguese
Tariff.

The Council considered the Portuguese Tariff upon a report issued by the British Secretary of Legation at Madrid, and it was decided to send a memorial to the Foreign Secretary calling his attention to its unfair incidence, and asking the Government to endeavour to place British manufactures on a better footing with that country.

Wire and
Metal Gauge

The great inconvenience and uncertainty arising from the existence of a number of varying wire and metal gauges was considered by the Council, who communicated on the subject with Sir Joseph Whitworth and other authorities. They found the question surrounded by great difficulties, but felt it was extremely desirable that an

authorised and uniform standard gauge should, if possible, be constructed and based upon some definite principle, such as the decimal division of an inch. In process of time the Council thought that such a gauge might be universally adopted, and they therefore invited the co-operation of any member of the Chamber who possessed a special knowledge of the subject.

In their annual report the Council stated that the experience of the previous year confirmed the view they had expressed at an earlier date, that the depression under which the trade of the country had so long continued had not reached its worst. Some of the causes of this deep-seated commercial depression had been in part removed or modified, but the terrible famines in India and China, the desolating war in the East, the absolute loss of English capital in worthless foreign loans, to the extent, it was calculated, of £300,000,000 sterling, and deficient harvests for several successive years, had grievously crippled the purchasing power of a large part of the population. There were also other causes in active operation, among which the Council enumerated "bitter and ruinous disputes between capital and labour," "keen foreign competition," "excess of production over demand" (the latter stimulated by the exceptional inflation of trade and prices during and after the Franco-German War), and "the withdrawal of vast numbers of men from peaceful and profitable industrial pursuits to form large standing armies, thus converting the great countries of Europe into little better than armed camps."

State of
Trade.

CHAPTER L.

1879.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 4th, 5th, and 6th March, 1879, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. J. S. Wright, Mr. R. S. Bartleet, and Mr. C. D. Sturge.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Wire and
Metal Gauges

On the proposition of Mr. R. S. Bartleet the Association unanimously approved of the adoption of one uniform standard wire and metal guage, made compulsory by law if necessary, and invited the various Chambers interested in the metal trades to co-operate for the furtherance of this object.

Foreign
Tariff
Committee.

The Council appointed Messrs. C. H. Wagner, Henry Weiss, H. L. Muller, and J. S. Wright, with the Vice-Chairman, to examine certain foreign tariffs. The tariffs examined were those of Germany and Austria, but, unfortunately, the records do not show what action was taken or representations made. In addition to these tariffs, however, the Committee considered the new Canadian Tariff, and upon their report the Council made a strong protest against the large increase of duties on hardware and brassfoundry.

Minister of
Commerce
and
Agriculture.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce the Chamber proposed a resolution noting with satisfaction the successful issue of the action taken by the President of the Association (Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd) in bringing before the House of Commons on the 9th July, 1879, the desirability of a Minister of Commerce and Agriculture being appointed with a seat in the Cabinet, and again urging the matter upon Her Majesty's Government. The resolution was carried unanimously. It appears that Mr. Lloyd's motion, although opposed by the Government, was carried by a majority of 20 in a House of 140.

Depreciation
of Silver.

Amongst other resolutions which the Chamber proposed at the Autumnal Meeting of the Association was one that a memorial should be presented to Her Majesty's Government to appoint a Commission or recommend a Parliamentary Committee to inquire into the cause of the depreciation of the value of silver and its operation on the commercial interests of the country and India. With a slight alteration this resolution was carried unanimously.

Insufficient
Records.

It is to be regretted that the records of the Chamber for this year are of an unsatisfactory character. The Council appears to have met regularly as in previous

years, but the minutes are scrappy and contain no adequate details of the subjects dealt with. Furthermore there is no record of any annual report or annual meeting, although the Council had been even more than usually active at the meetings of the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

CHAPTER LI.

1880.

Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. J. S. Wright, Association
Mr. R. S. Bartleet, Mr. J. P. Turner, and Mr. E. Fisher of Chambers
Smith, represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of Commerce
of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held on the
17th, 18th, and 19th February, 1880. At this meeting
Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd who had filled the office of President
of the Association for eighteen years retired. During his
period of office Mr. Lloyd had the satisfaction of seeing—
largely owing to his own indefatigable exertions and his
supreme display of public spirit—the Association raised
from a body representing quite a few commercial centres
to one representing fifty-one of the chief mercantile and
manufacturing districts of the United Kingdom. Bir-
mingham is naturally proud of the fact that one of its most
distinguished business men should have held the high
position for so long a period, and the whole of the Chamber
of Commerce of to-day (1913) may look back with
satisfaction to the early years when quite a few enter-
prising spirits, of whom Mr. Lloyd was the head and
leader, realising the necessity of effective commercial
combination and organised effort, set themselves to the
arduous task of consolidating the mercantile and manu-
facturing classes not only in their own interests but also
in those of the country. Endowed with indomitable
pluck Mr. Sampson Lloyd evinced his interest in the
welfare of commerce by his work for and on behalf of the

Association of Chambers, which he nurtured and reared from its earliest infancy to the stage when it could take care of itself as it has done to this day. Had Mr. Lloyd faltered in his adherence to the Association during his term of office it is almost certain its career would have received a serious check; but no, he was sound in his views. He knew—as only too few even of his immediate colleagues knew—that organised and combined effort was essential to the welfare of the country. Birmingham may ever look back with pride to the fact that Mr. Lloyd was for so long a period—which could not previously and which has not since been surpassed—the titular—and actual—head of an Association's evidence of whose work is to be found in the Statute Book from the date when he was selected for the high and honourable office to which he was appointed in 1861 to the present day when Chambers of Commerce are much more recognised as bodies essential to the welfare of the nation.

Wire and
Metal Gauges

At this meeting of the Association Mr. J. S. Wright, who had been a member of the Council of the Chamber since 1855, and whose decease before the end of the year occasioned widespread sorrow and regret, moved that the Committee on the subject of uniformity in wire and metal gauges should consist of Mr. T. R. Harding (Leeds), G. Artingstall and John Rylands (Warrington), —. Neve (Wolverhampton), J. S. Wright, S. Timmins, and —. Elliot (Birmingham), with power to add to their number. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Postal Notes

Mr. Wright then moved that the Association approve of the issue of postal notes as proposed by the Committee appointed by the Government to inquire into the subject; and that the Council should memorialise the Government in favour of the Bill then before Parliament. This was carried by a majority, showing that since 1877, when a similar Birmingham resolution was withdrawn owing to opposition initiated by the banking interest, the views of the Association had considerably advanced.

Railway
Commission.

At the same meeting Mr. Wright moved that the action of the Railway Commissioners' Court having given general satisfaction, Her Majesty's Government be memorialised to make it permanent with extended

powers, especially with reference to (1) unreasonable rates ; (2) the adoption of the Clearing House classification of goods and adaptation of the then existing statutory rates thereto ; (3) the submission of such revised rates to the Commissioners for approval ; (4) the publication at every station of all rates therefrom ; (5) the compulsory giving of through rates on the application of individuals using the lines ; (6) the conferment upon Incorporated Chambers of Commerce of a *locus standi* before the Commissioners ; (7) reasonable facilities being afforded for bringing forward complaints of contravention of the Railway and Canal Traffic Acts before the Commissioners. This was carried unanimously, and as readers of this work will see few questions have loomed more largely in the history of the Birmingham and other Chambers of Commerce than those arising between Railway Companies and traders.

The Chamber was still keeping a watchful eye upon the very important question of Bankruptcy Law, upon which, among many others, it had rendered invaluable services in the past. It appears that there was before Parliament in the session of 1880 a Bill for the amendment of the law, and at the annual meeting of the Association Mr. R. S. Bartlett moved that it should be considered by the Council "as soon as possible," and that the Council should arrange for evidence to be placed before the Select Committee to which it had been referred, in support of the principles which had previously been approved by the Associated Chambers and many of which were included in the Bankruptcy Bill prepared by the Association. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Still another resolution was moved by the Birmingham Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association. This was to the effect that Her Majesty's Government be urged to recommend a Parliamentary Committee to enquire into the effect produced on the commercial interests of the country by the depreciation in the value of silver, and, further, to consider what, if any, legislative action was desirable thereon. Although the resolution was of a quite colourless character it is obvious either that controversial matter was introduced into the discussion (a report of

Bankruptcy
Law
Amendment.

Depreciation
of Silver.

which is not available to the writer), or that the subject was one upon which commercial opinion was divided, for it was rejected on a vote being taken.

Autumnal
Meeting.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held this year, the sole representative of the Birmingham Chamber was Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., who, although he had laid down the reins of office after a period of active and strenuous service extending over a period of nearly two decades, was still enthusiastic in his support of the great cause, and prepared, even at great personal inconvenience, to give time and effort in its support. Birmingham on this occasion had no resolutions on the programme, but, on behalf of the Executive Council, Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd moved, and it was seconded by Mr. T. F. Firth (the father of the President of the Association in the Centenary year of the Birmingham Chamber), and resolved unanimously, that in the opinion of the Association it was desirable, in order to facilitate the progress of public business in Parliament that Bills which had been read a second time in either House should be taken up at the same stage in the next ensuing session of the same Parliament. Needless to say this was carried unanimously.

Treaties with
Servia and
Roumania.

In their annual report for 1880 the Council of the Chamber stated that a Treaty of Commerce had been concluded between Great Britain and Servia, which was favourable to the interests of Birmingham merchants trading with that country, and that a treaty had also been entered into with Roumania, which placed the two countries on the "most favoured nation basis" as regarded each other, and which also provided for the reduction by Roumania of the duties in copper, glass and the majority of manufactured iron goods.

Spanish and
Portuguese
Tariffs.

A communication was received from the Association of Chambers of Commerce intimating that informal negotiations respecting Tariff regulations with Spain and Portugal were at a stage when it was desirable that persons interested in exporting goods to those countries should make known any desirable changes in the tariff. The Secretary, by personal interviews with merchants and manufacturers, collected a considerable amount of

information as to the classes of articles shipped to those countries from this district—the then existing duties on which were excessive. This information was arranged in a tabular form and forwarded to the Foreign Secretary, with a letter expressing the hope that his lordship would cause them to be brought under the notice of the Tariff Commission with a view to obtain from Spain and Portugal not only most favoured nation treatment but also such additional reductions of duty as would render possible an increased trade with those countries.

The Council also had under consideration copies of the “*Journal Officiel*,” supplied by Her Majesty’s Foreign Office containing the general reports of the French Chamber of Deputies on the proposed new French General Tariff, and an amended report relative to the same tariff submitted by the French Government to the Chamber of Deputies. A Sub-Committee, consisting of Messrs. C. H. Wagner, C. D. Sturge, Henry Weiss, H. L. Muller, and J. S. Wright, was appointed to examine these. They met on several occasions and presented a report recommending the Council to take steps to bring several classes of goods mentioned in the Tariff under the notice of the Tariff Commission. As a result of this the Council transmitted a memorial to the Foreign Secretary, directing his attention to a list of articles annexed thereto and enumerated in the proposed tariff—the majority of which were largely manufactured in “this town and district,” and the proposed duty on which appeared to be excessive and in some instances prohibitive.

In their annual report the Council said they regretted they had been unable for several years to report any change in the almost universal depression under which all mercantile and manufacturing interests had languished —“a depression probably unexampled in its duration and intensified in severity from its following a period of great and unusual inflation.” They were able this year, however, to say that there was reason to believe that the worst was passed and to hope for a slow but certain improvement—the evidence of such improvement being found in the gradual but continued expansion of trade in the increased mineral and other traffic and in the consequent expansion of railway dividends.

French Tariff

State of Trade.

CHAPTER LII.

1881.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce on February 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., Mr. C. D. Sturge, Mr. H. L. Muller, and Mr. J. P. Turner.

The first resolution moved at the meeting was by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, on behalf of Birmingham, which was to the effect that the Chambers were of opinion that the "principle that the creditors of a bankrupt should have the power of directing the administration of his estate by one or more trustees selected by themselves" was a sound one, and ought to be adhered to in any new legislation on the subject of bankruptcy. This resolution embodied a principle which the Chamber has on many subsequent occasions re-affirmed—the object being to prevent the breaking up of estates in cases where they might be preserved in the interests both of creditors and of honest and unfortunate debtors, but it seems that no less than eleven Chambers had resolutions on the programme, and a Committee, consisting of one representative from each of these, was appointed to consolidate the proposals and bring them forward at a later stage of the meeting as one resolution.

Bankruptcy
Law.

It was found impossible to make one resolution, but a series was introduced, and the first of these was that of the Birmingham Chamber mentioned above, which was carried unanimously. Among the other resolutions submitted were three by Mr. Lloyd, the whole of which were carried unanimously. The first was in favour of all bankruptcy costs being taxed by the Court; the second in favour of trustees being compelled to render periodical statements of account to the Court and to make periodical dividends as were required by the Scotch law; and the third proposed that a bankrupt who failed to satisfy the Court that his insolvency had arisen from causes beyond his reasonable control should be declared by law ineligible

to occupy the position of a member of Parliament, of a magistrate, of a member of a Municipal Corporation, or treasurer or trustee of a public body for a term of years unless and until he had paid to his creditors a dividend of not less than 10/- in the £.

At the same meeting Mr. J. P. Turner, on behalf Bimetallism. of the Chamber, moved, and it was resolved by a large majority, that the Government be urged to unite with other leading nations in a Conference with reference to the desirability of a general bimetallic system of currency. The subject was also discussed at a meeting of Members of the Chamber and the Exchange, and their friends held on March 29th, at which the following resolution was carried by a large majority :—"That the attention of Her Majesty's Government be called to the grave injury, loss, and disturbance to our trading interests with India and all silver-using countries, caused by the unexampled depreciation in the value of silver, and that they be urged to appoint delegates to the forthcoming International Monetary Conference in Paris for the purpose of investigating the course of such loss and disturbance and if proper devise a remedy." The Council expressed the opinion that the demonetization of silver by Germany in 1873 and the consequent withdrawal of mintage facilities for silver by France, Italy, and other commercial states, had tended seriously to hinder and impede the progressive development of international trade, and that any considerable further demonetization of silver by those countries would probably be attended by still more widespread and disastrous effects.

The Committee appointed by the Association of Wire and Metal Gauge. Chambers of Commerce at the Autumnal Meeting in 1879 to suggest a uniform standard wire and metal gauge to be constructed on scientific principles submitted their report to this meeting. Among the members of the Committee were Mr. John S. Wright, Mr. H. W. Elliott, Mr. Samuel Timmins, and Mr. Samuel Booth of the Birmingham Chamber. Mr. J. S. Wright (who had taken a considerable interest in the matter) died before the conclusion of the Committee's labours. The Committee, which was appointed at the instance of the Birmingham

Chamber, met formally once in London and three times in Birmingham, but these meetings did not by any means represent the amount of consideration given to the matter, for individual members engaged in extensive correspondence with manufacturers and others in various branches of trade in which gauges were used, and the Committee had the advantage of conferring with Sir Joseph Whitworth, Mr. Latimer Clarke, C.E., and others who had taken a special interest in the improvement of wire and metal gauges. Their report was a very exhaustive one and was accompanied by elaborate tables with reference to a proposed British Standard Gauge.

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association held at Plymouth on October 4th and 5th, 1881, the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd, Mr. Alfred Field, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Patent Law
Reform.

On the proposition of Mr. S. S. Lloyd resolutions were passed in favour of the amendment of the Patent Laws, by the insertion of provisions compelling patentees to manufacture within the United Kingdom all goods which were the subject of a British patent or to grant licenses for such working, and also in favour of the reduction of the cost of provisional protection to a merely nominal sum in order to afford facilities to poor inventors.

Fiscal Policy

Prior to the Autumnal Meeting Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd at a meeting of the Council of the Chamber said he felt it would be interesting if the question of the revision of the fiscal policy of the country (which, at that time, was not really a party question) was not entirely omitted from discussion. He thought that the bringing forward of a resolution would make the meeting at Plymouth interesting, and the time occupied in discussion would not be unprofitable "as the question was in the air and might as well be discussed." He added that he had prepared a resolution in such a form as not to commit anyone to possible party views, and that even if the Council liked to affirm the opposite it would answer his purpose just as well—his only object being to ventilate the subject. The resolution, after calling attention to the long-continued depression in the productive industries of the country and the protective policy adopted by foreign countries, urged

that as the British Empire offered an almost unlimited field for the extension of the trade and for the employment of the capital of this country, our national policy should be directed to bring about freedom of trade, both in selling and buying (as completely as circumstances would permit) between the various parts of the Empire, and thus, by establishing and developing the resources of a United Empire, to enable Great Britain to become more independent of the effect of hostile foreign tariffs. An interesting discussion ensued, and the meeting ultimately deferred to the view of the Chairman that Mr. Lloyd's resolution would tend to encourage retaliatory duties and that the Council would not be justified in committing the Chamber to such an expression of opinion. The resolution was therefore moved by Mr. Lloyd at the Autumnal Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce in the following terms :—

“ That the long-continued depression in the productive industries of this country and the disposition shown by Foreign States to increase import duties render it highly desirable that the attention of Her Majesty's Government should be directed to the almost unlimited field for the extension of the trade and the employment of the capital of this country offered by the Colonies and Dependencies of Great Britain, and that our national policy should be directed as far as possible to bring about freedom of trade between the various parts of the Empire, and thus by utilising and developing their resources enable this country to become more independent of the effects of hostile foreign tariffs.”

By a vote of 33 to 15 the Association added the following words to the resolution, which was then carried by a large majority —

“ That this meeting takes this opportunity of expressing the opinion that the principle of absolute free trade forms the soundest basis on which to extend and consolidate trade relations.”

In the year 1881 the Council seemed to have commenced the systematic examination of proposed legislation before Parliament, and appointed a Committee

Commercial
Legislation.

for the purpose of considering Commercial Bills and reporting upon their provisions, or, if necessary, taking action with regard thereto. It may truthfully be said that the Chamber has never taken up a more important function or one more appropriate to the objects for which it was established. From its earliest days certain Bills had always been carefully considered and active steps taken to oppose legislative projects which were regarded as detrimental to commercial interests; to support those which were deemed likely to be advantageous; to prepare Bills for introduction by local members of Parliament; and to urge the Government to bring in measures which were considered necessary in the interests of the commercial community. But in 1881 this function appears to have been exercised in a wider sense than previously. The County Courts Bill, the Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill, and the Judgments in Inferior Courts Bill, were the subject of a petition presented by Mr. John Bright, in which the Council saw they dealt with subjects on which legislation was needed and contained principles valuable to the commercial community, and that they therefore "prayed" Parliament to pass them into law. Two other Bills were dealt with in the same petition, viz., the Limitation of Actions Bill and the Small Debts (Limitation of Actions) Bill, which the Council "prayed" may be rejected as no change was desirable "in the time in which debts" were then recoverable.

Imprison-
ment for
Debt.

For many years prior to 1881 sentimental considerations had induced tender-hearted people to advocate the abolition of "imprisonment for debt," improperly so-called, and the Council had on many occasions expressed a very definite opinion on the proposal. In 1881 a Bill was introduced to reverse the previous practice, and the Council petitioned the House of Commons against it on the ground that instances were of frequent occurrence in which a knowledge of the power vested in County Court Judges to commit debtors to prison under certain well-defined conditions, had a salutary effect on those who were in a position to pay their debts, but would, in the event of such power being taken away, refuse to do so. The Council also expressed the view that the

passing of such a measure would, to a very great extent, destroy the system of retail credit, by which, in times of necessity, the working classes were enabled to obtain food, and consequently cause an increase in the number of applications for parochial relief, thus throwing upon the ratepayers additional burdens.

On February 15th, 1881, the House of Commons Railway
Rates. decided to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into the charges of Railway Companies and Canal Companies and Railway and Canal Companies for the conveyance of merchandise, minerals, agricultural produce, and parcels, into the laws and other conditions affecting such charges and into the working of the Railway Commission of 1873 ; and to report as to any amendments of the laws and practice affecting the said charges that might seem to be desirable. Shortly after the appointment of this Committee the Council of the Chamber convened a meeting of the leading manufacturers and traders of the district, which was held at the Queen's Hotel on April 21st, for the purpose of considering the advisability of collecting evidence of excessive and differential charges imposed by Railway Companies for the carriage of goods from the district with a view to the same being submitted to the Committee. The importance of the question even at that day when the conditions were infinitely better than they are in 1913 is shown by the fact that upwards of one hundred and twenty influential gentlemen were present. Many instances of anomalous and differential rates were reported, and a Committee was appointed to co-operate with the Council in preparing evidence to be laid before the Committee. Exemplary activity was shown in the matter. Many joint meetings of the local Committee and the Council were held, and it was decided to convene meetings of the members of the various trades of the district requesting them prior to the meetings to supply information as to (1) improper classification of goods ; (2) destruction of competition caused by the absorption of canals by the Railway Companies ; (3) excessive and unfair rates in comparison with other large centres ; and (4) illegal rates. Between April 28th and May 5th meetings were consequently held at the Chamber of eighteen of

the most important trades, and the reports prepared at those meetings were subsequently presented to the Council and the Joint Committee. Application was then made to the Select Committee asking that evidence might be taken from a representative of each of the trades referred to; but the Select Committee declined to receive evidence from more than two witnesses from Birmingham, notwithstanding that it was pointed out that the trade of Birmingham and the surrounding district was not like that of many other centres concentrated mainly in one or two industries, but that it consisted of many extensive trades. Strong representations were then made, which resulted in the Select Committee hearing evidence from Messrs. Alfred Hickman, Noah Hingley, Richard Heathfield, J. N. Brown, W. E. Willson, Donald Kempson, and others, representing the Joint Committee, and from Messrs. Jesse Hawkes and W. F. Haydon (Secretary), representing the Chamber. Mr. Hawkes gave evidence on matters affecting the timber and glass trades, whilst Mr. Haydon's evidence consisted principally of particulars of excessive and differential rates on the carriage from the district of bar iron, metallic bedsteads, machinery, tubes, citric acid, bricks, hardware, etc., and included the following recommendations, viz. :—(1) that rates' books should be published by every Railway Company, and sold at a reasonable price to the public, and that all goods should be clearly and intelligibly classed therein; (2) that a mileage rate on a graduated scale according to distance should be instituted by the Railway Companies; (3) that the liability of the Companies to remunerate freighters for the damage of goods carried at owners' risk should be more clearly defined; (4) that Railway Companies should not be permitted to advance any rate without giving reasonable notice of their intention to do so; (5) that the classification used by the Railway Companies required very great alteration and that the Clearing House classification of goods should be supplied to any trader on his paying a reasonable price for the same; and (6) that Chambers of Commerce should have a *locus standi* before the Railway Commission. It is important to observe that practically all of these recommendations were

adopted by the Select Committee, and that subsequently the end aimed at by the Chamber was more or less completely secured. True it is that since then the grievances of traders have multiplied in regard to rates, classification and conditions, but had it not been for the changes brought about as a result of the efforts made in 1881 the conditions to-day would have been infinitely worse than they are.

In July the Council received a letter from the Foreign Office intimating that the Japanese Government had claimed a revision of the Treaty of 1858, and enclosing a draft Commercial Treaty, which the Government of Japan desired to promulgate, together with tariffs and prints of correspondence containing mercantile opinions thereon. The Council thereupon appointed a Committee which reported that the general *ad valorem* duty on goods imported into Japan from the United Kingdom had been 5 per cent., but that the Japanese Government proposed to increase this by imposing duties in varying amounts from 1 to 35 per cent. "This increased duty," the Committee continued, "must, if insisted upon by the Japanese Government, be detrimental to our export trade with that country." From the correspondence referred to the Committee found, however, that it appeared to be absolutely necessary, for fiscal reasons, for the Japanese Government to resort to some increase in their duties to enable them to balance their expenditure; but they expressed the opinion that the import duties should not, if possible, exceed 10 per cent.—which would give a largely increased revenue without greatly interfering with existing trade. Higher rates, they averred, would "in all cases diminish consumption in a country so poor as Japan and deprive the people of many things which had become necessities."

With much satisfaction the Council confirmed the view expressed in their previous report that there was a gradual but certain improvement in trade conditions—an improvement which with slight interruptions had continued throughout the year. After quoting statistics they ventured to express a confident hope that "should our

Japanese
Treaty of
Commerce.

State of
Trade.

relations with other countries continue peaceful and a good understanding be maintained between capital and labour " the great industrial interests of the country would soon be restored to a condition of prosperity.

CHAPTER LIII.

1882.

The
Chamber's
Internal
Arrange-
ments.

At the first meeting of the Council subsequent to the Annual General Meeting in 1882, upon the question as to the appointment of President, Mr. Alfred Field said he thought it was a mistake for the Chamber to appoint a President as well as a Chairman. He said it was not usual for other Chambers to have a President who occupied the same position as their President, and thought that the arrangement stood in the way of suitable gentlemen taking the position of Chairman knowing " that in that capacity they would have another person placed over their heads." He thought that, in the event of Mr. Muntz at any time resigning, it would be well for the Council to consider the advisability of abolishing the office of President, as it was quite evident that as a general rule their President took no share of the work, and that it was left to the Chairman. In view of this he felt that the " honour and dignity of being at the head of the Chamber " should be conferred on the Chairman. After some little discussion the previous practice was continued, and a President (Mr. P. H. Muntz) and Chairman (Mr. C. D. Sturge) appointed. Indeed, it was not until 1910 that a change was made, when it was decided to convert the office of Chairman into that of President, and the office of President into that of Hon. President.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on February 28th and March 1st and 2nd, the Chamber was represented by Messrs.

Sampson S. Lloyd, Ralph Heaton, H. W. Elliott, C. D. Sturge, Alfred Field, Fredk. Ash, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd moved on behalf of the Patent Laws Chamber: "That it was highly desirable that the Patent Laws should be amended; that in any such amendment provision should be made for working here, either direct or by means of compulsory licence; that the cost of provisional protection should be reduced to a nominal sum; and that the period allowed for provisional protection should be extended. An amendment was moved to omit of words respecting working, but the Birmingham motion was ultimately carried by 36 votes to 26—a majority insufficient, however, to allow any action to be taken upon it.

Mr. C. D. Sturge then moved, and it was resolved Companies' Acts Amendment. unanimously, that the Joint Stock Companies' Acts required amendment by an enactment making it illegal for Companies to defraud their ordinary creditors for the benefit of debenture holders, as they might then do by mortgaging their future property and book debts; and also by providing that all securities which, if given, by private persons or firms would require registration as Bills of Sale should, when given by Joint Stock Companies, be void unless so registered.

Upon the proposition of Mr. Lloyd, seconded by Mr. Alfred Field, it was then resolved by a large majority that in the opinion of the Association the demonetisation of silver by Germany in 1873, and the consequent withdrawal of mintage facilities for silver by France, Italy, and other commercial States had tended seriously to hinder and impede the progressive development of international trade; that any considerable further demonetisation of silver by those countries would probably be attended by still more widespread and disastrous effects; and that for these reasons the Association hoped that the British Government would send delegates to the International Monetary Conference authorised to enter freely and fully into the discussions and to make any recommendations to the Government they might think proper. Bimetallism-Demonetisation of Silver

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Gloucester on October 3rd and 4th, 1882, the Chamber was represented by Mr. H. W. Elliott, Sampson S. Lloyd, Fredk. Ash, C. D. Sturge, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

Patent Laws
Reform.

Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd again brought forward the resolution he had moved at the Annual Meeting on the subject of Patent Law Reform, but which had not then been carried by a sufficient majority to enable the Association to take action. The motion was seconded by Mr. Herbert (now Colonel) Hughes, of Sheffield, so that it had a very authoritative backing. It is an interesting commentary upon the legislation of a few years ago introduced by Mr. Lloyd George, when President of the Board of Trade, that Mr. Samuel, of Coventry, regarded the resolution as an infringement of the principles of free trade. After an animated debate, the resolution was carried by 32 votes to 19—still not sufficient to make it operative.

Wire and
Metal Gauge.

Mr. H. W. Elliott moved that the Executive Council of the Association having approved of a Standard Wire and Metal Gauge based upon the scale of sizes then recently suggested by the Board of Trade, steps be taken to urge upon that Board the desirability of legalising the use of the same. He observed that the scale was similar to that previously agreed to by the Association. The resolution was carried.

Commercial
Legislation.

In their annual report the Council of the Chamber expressed regret at the paucity of commercial legislation. They referred, however, to three "measures of great importance" which had been passed into law during the session, and all of which were introduced into the House under the auspices of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, viz:—The Bills of Exchange Act, a measure consolidating the law so that a merchant or banker could in a few minutes ascertain the law regulating the Bills he holds; the Bills of Sale Act (1878) Amendment Act, which, it was felt, would remedy many evils in connection with Bills of Sale; and the Inferior Courts Judgment Extension Act—a measure enacting that a judgment in an inferior Court obtained in England, Scotland, or Ireland may, by registration, be made

available for execution in either of those countries. The Chamber petitioned in favour of all these Bills, and also in favour of the Partnerships Bill, but against the Bill for the abolition of Imprisonment for Debt by Inferior Courts. They also had under consideration Bills for reforming the Bankruptcy and Patent Laws.

A communication was received from Earl Granville Spanish Customs Tariff. stating that the Foreign Office would be glad to receive any suggestions that the Chamber might have to offer on the Spanish Tariff in its bearing upon the interests of the district. A committee was at once appointed, and after the matter had been considered the Foreign Office was memorialised on the necessity of endeavouring to induce the Spanish Government to extend to British merchandise the Tariff applicable to countries enjoying the most favoured nation treatment. Subsequently a memorial was presented to the Prime Minister (Mr. W. E. Gladstone) calling attention to the unsatisfactory commercial relations subsisting between this country and Spain, and once more asking the "prompt and earnest attention of Her Majesty's Government to the absolute necessity in the interests of British trade that these relations should as soon as possible be placed on a better and more amicable footing." Attention was then called to the more favourable treatment given by Spain to other countries, and the Chamber expressed the view that the exports from this country were threatened with almost entire extinction unless the Government obtained from Spain a Treaty securing to British traders a fair field for open and honourable competition; that every month of delay, even if followed by a Treaty, would enable Continental competitors who were getting their goods into Spain at a lower tariff to extend and tighten their grasp of the Spanish markets; and that, believing further delay would be ruinous to the interests of this country, they urged the Government to ask the House of Commons for power to re-arrange the wine duties on a fair and equitable basis. The negotiations which were opened with Spain unfortunately collapsed.

The Chamber also made a representation to the Austria-Hungarian Tariff. Foreign Office as to the serious effect on local trade of the

new duties Austria-Hungary proposed to place on iron, iron goods, and machinery, but the Council reported that the efforts made by Her Majesty's Government through the British Ambasssador at Vienna produced no result, as the current of Austro-Hungarian opinion had set strongly in favour of protection to native industry.

Russian
Tariff.

This was evidently a period of rising foreign tariffs. We find Russia proposing a "slight increase of duty on a considerable number of goods" made in Birmingham and district, and the Council informing the Board of Trade that they regretted Russia should have adopted this course.

Minister of
Commerce.

In their annual report the Council stated that they had for many years advocated the appointment of a Minister of Commerce, and that at last there appeared to be good reason to believe that such an appointment would ere long be made, as the Prime Minister had intimated that the Cabinet had a plan ready. Unfortunately the plan did not come to fruition, and we are still without a Minister of Commerce—that is to say, a Minister whose primary functions should be to watch over and to foster the trade of the country. Many improvements have been made in the organisation of the Board of Trade as a result of the efforts made by Chambers of Commerce, but the constitution of the Department is such that its President can never occupy the position of a Minister of Commerce properly so called.

Railway
Rates.

The Council reported that the Select Committee of the House of Commons before which two members and the Secretary of the Chamber had given evidence on the subject of Railway and Canal Rates and Charges, had issued their report, in which they recommended (*inter alia*) that Chambers of Commerce should have a *locus standi* before the Railway Commission; that one uniform classification should be adopted over the whole railway system; that terminal charges should be recognised, subject to publication by the Railway Companies, and in case of challenge to sanction by the Railway Commission; that Parliament should not sanction any further control, direct or indirect, of canal navigation by a Railway Company; and that the Railway Commission should be

made a permanent Court of Record, and its powers and jurisdiction extended. The Council expressed the hope that these recommendations would be adopted by the Government as a basis for legislation.

The Council reported, with regret, that the improvement in trade had only been partially maintained. In some branches, they said, there had been and still was considerable activity, and there was no reason to complain of the general volume of trade ; but the productive power of this and other countries was developing so rapidly and the consequent rivalry becoming so keen, that there was great and increasing difficulty in finding remunerative markets and obtaining an adequate profit for the skill and capital employed.

State of
Trade.

CHAPTER LIV.

1883.

Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, C. D. Sturge, Fredk. Ash, Alfred Field, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary) represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held on February 20th, 21st, and 22nd, 1883.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

The resolution submitted to the Association at the previous Annual Meeting with regard to the Demonetisation of Silver, was again moved by Mr. Alfred Field, but on this occasion it was lost, the votes for being only 23 as compared with 33 against. In their annual report the Council were silent as to the arguments which brought about the defeat of an apparently colourless resolution, but it would seem from the debate that the spectre of bimetallism was at the root of it.

Demonetisa-
tion of Silver

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Derby on October 2nd and 3rd, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. W. Tonks, C. D. Sturge, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary) ; but no resolutions were moved by them on behalf of the Chamber.

Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

**Commercial
Legislation.**

The Council reported that the past session of Parliament had been signalised by the passage through the legislature of two most important commercial measures, viz. :—the Bankruptcy Act, 1883, and the Patents Trade Marks and Designs Act, 1883, both of which had been introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P. The Council expressed the opinion that these Acts would be productive of substantial advantage to the commercial community, and congratulated the President of the Board of Trade on so ably conducting them through the Grand Committee of the House of Commons. With their usual thoroughness and promptitude in matters of exceptional importance the Council, immediately on the introduction of these Bills, appointed a Special Committee to consider them. This Committee framed a number of suggestions and amendments which were printed and forwarded to each member of the Grand Committee, and the Council had the extreme satisfaction of observing that they were to a large extent adopted and embodied in the Statutes enacted. Space does not permit of the points successfully raised by the Chamber being dealt with in detail, but it will be clear to all readers of their history that the Council had been in the very forefront of commercial organisations in urging the need for new legislation. With regard to the Patents Trade Marks and Designs Act, 1883, the Council stated that it contained provisions which they had for many years advocated both direct and through the Association of Chambers of Commerce, including the simplification of formalities and the reduction of fees on obtaining Letters Patent so as to afford facilities for poor inventors. The Act provided that forms of application for a patent might be obtained at a Post Office; that a patent for four years should be secured for £4; that the period of provisional protection should be extended from six to fifteen months; and that the Board of Trade should have power to order compulsory licences to be granted on reasonable terms if the patent was not being worked in the United Kingdom or if the reasonable requirements of the public were not being supplied. In connection with Trade Marks and Designs the fees for registration were reduced, and the

**Patents, &c.,
Act.**

Registrar of Trade Marks and Designs had an interview on the 20th November with the Council as to the rules and orders to be issued for the carrying out of the Acts. The Council informed him that when the Bill was before Parliament they had suggested that the registration fees should not be increased ; that they were of opinion that the Board of Trade should take the power of refusing to grant copyright of design in such cases as they thought it expedient to do so ; and that facilities should be given to traders to register trade marks in series at reduced rates. To a considerable extent their suggestions were embodied in the rules and orders subsequently issued by the Board, so that the Council had every reason to congratulate themselves on the success of their efforts, which not only more than justified their existence, but gave them a claim to wider support from the commercial community, as it was clear they were doing work which individuals could not themselves have accomplished as separate units.

A Bill was introduced into Parliament to abolish the power of imprisonment for debt by County Courts, and the Council, following their consistent policy, petitioned against it, believing that instances were of constant occurrence in which a knowledge of the power then vested in County Court Judges to commit persons to prison under certain well-defined conditions for the non-payment of their debts had a salutary effect on debtors who were in a position to pay, but would in the event of the power to imprison being abolished refuse or neglect to do so. It was also urged that the Bill, if enacted, would to a great extent destroy the existing system of retail credit, by which in time of necessity the working classes were enabled to obtain food, and would thus, in a large number of cases, cause applications for parochial relief, and thereby throw additional burdens on the ratepayers. The Bill did not pass into law.

A communication was received from the Foreign Office intimating that the Turkish Government had given notice to the English Government to terminate the Treaty of Commerce of the 29th April, 1861, between Great Britain and Turkey, and that Mr. Wrench, H.M. Consul at Constantinople, was coming to this country

Imprison-
ment for
Debt.

Turkish
Customs
Tariff.

on the subject of a new Treaty. The Council at once inserted an advertisement in the local newspapers announcing that negotiations were in progress for the arrangement of a new Treaty between the two countries, and requesting merchants and manufacturers shipping goods to Turkish ports to communicate with the Secretary. A circular to the same effect was transmitted to each member of the Chamber, and the Secretary subsequently met Mr. Wrench at the Foreign Office and communicated to him a considerable amount of information which he had obtained at Mr. Wrench's request as to the average values of the goods manufactured in Birmingham and district. In their annual report the Council stated that Mr. Wrench had since returned to Constantinople to confer with the Turkish Commissioners, and that arrangements had been made pending the negotiations by which the duty of 8% *ad valorem* was extended for several months.

Spanish
Customs
Tariff.

The Council reported with satisfaction that Sir Robert Morier, Her Majesty's Minister at Madrid, had succeeded in concluding an arrangement with the Spanish Government calculated to put an end to the hostile treatment suffered by British merchants trading with that country since 1877. Under the arrangement the Spanish Government engaged to make within the limits compatible with their financial requirements, with due regard to the state of Spanish industry, and with the sanction of the Cortes, such modifications in their conventional tariff as should be found necessary to meet the legitimate requirements of British trade; and the British Government engaged to apply to Parliament for sanction to modify the alcoholic scale of the British Tariff so as to meet the legitimate requirements of Spanish trade. Pending the negotiation of a formal Treaty each Government agreed to apply for powers to introduce an interim arrangement.

Wire Gauge:

The Council reported with satisfaction that during the year the Board of Trade obtained the sanction of the Queen in council for the legalisation of a standard wire gauge which very nearly approximated to the gauge

proposed by the Special Committee of the Association of Chambers of Commerce appointed some years previously at the suggestion of the Birmingham Chamber.

A Bill was introduced into Parliament during the previous session, promoted by a very influential body of persons in and around Manchester, for the purpose of authorising the construction of a Ship Canal from the mouth of the Mersey at Liverpool to Manchester. A deputation of gentlemen interested in the undertaking met the Council of the Birmingham Chamber on January 17th, 1883, and explained the objects and scope of the scheme for the projected canal, and its bearing on the industries and commerce of the manufacturing districts. The Council considered that the construction of the proposed Ship Canal would be a great boon to the mercantile community of the country by giving an impetus to the extension and improvement of waterways for the carriage of merchandise, and at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce they moved a resolution stating that as the trade of the country required greater facilities of internal communication it was desirable as far as possible to facilitate the enlargement and improvement of canals and rivers, and expressing the hope that the Executive Council of the Association would petition Parliament in favour of the suspension of standing orders in reference to the Bill for the promotion of the Manchester Ship Canal. The resolution was carried unanimously, and the Chamber subsequently themselves petitioned both Houses of Parliament in favour of the Bill, which, however, after passing the Commons, was rejected by the Lords. It was stated that the Bill would be re-introduced, and the Chamber promised to render the promoters all possible support.

Her Majesty's Government entered into a provisional agreement with M. de Lesseps for the construction of a second Suez Canal, and the Council of the Chamber whilst admitting the desirability of the construction of a second canal, resolved that the conditions of the provisional agreement were entirely unsatisfactory, and expressed the hope that the sanction of Parliament would not be given thereto. Copies of this resolution were sent

to the local Members of Parliament and the Government "in deference to the forcibly-expressed opinion of a great number of commercial bodies," subsequently withdrew their proposal.

Minister of
Commerce.

Much to their regret, after the expectations entertained in the previous year, and which were referred to in the previous chapter, the Prime Minister replied to a question put to him in the House of Commons that the Government were of opinion that the demands of the commercial community in regard to the establishment of a Minister of Commerce were sufficiently met by the Board of Trade—the inference being that in the opinion of the Government no separate appointment of a Minister of Commerce was required.

Trade on the
Congo.

The Council memorialised Earl Granville, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the effect that the important interests of Great Britain on the South-West Coast of Africa, which were threatened by the unfounded claims of certain European Powers and by the exclusive treaties that were being made, should receive the immediate consideration of the Government, and that Great Britain should on no account cede to Portugal any rights that would give that country any control over the mouth or any part of the River Congo. They urged that the earnest endeavours of the Government should be directed to promoting an amicable understanding with the respective Governments of Europe and the United States in order that the rights of the natives on the banks of the Congo and the adjacent neutral territory might be respected and maintained, so that in the future there might be no interference on the part of any Power with the free navigation of the river and its tributaries.

State of
Trade.

The Council regretted they could not congratulate the Chamber on the position or prospects of the trade of the district so far as the immediate future was concerned, though, with regard to some, at least, of the important staple trades of the Midland district the volume of business had been and still was important. Owing to home and foreign competition the resulting profits had, no doubt, been much below the average. Referring to the several

causes of the condition of trade they expressed the opinion that relief to the then prevailing depression might be greatly aided by an equitable adjustment of the anomalies in railway rates and by considerable concessions in rates generally.

CHAPTER LV.

1884.

The Chamber was represented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on February 19th, 20th, and 21st, 1884, by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, Henry Hawkes, J. W. Tonks, C. D. Sturge, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary). No resolutions were moved on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber, but the delegates took an active part in the proceedings of the meeting. Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association which was held at Wolverhampton on September 30th and October 1st, 1884, the Chamber was represented by Mr. H. L. Muller, Mr. J. S. Turner, Mr. H. W. Elliott, Mr. Henry Hawkes, Mr. C. D. Sturge, and Mr. J. W. Tonks. Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.

The Chamber again brought the Silver question before the Association, Mr. J. P. Turner moving a resolution urging the Government to promote a Conference with other leading nations with reference to the desirability of rehabilitating silver as international money. The speeches in support of the resolution were in favour of a bimetallic as against a single standard, and after debate the resolution was rejected by 39 votes to 21. Demonetisa-
tion of Silver

In the early part of 1884 the Chamber was evidently somewhat anxious as to its position. It would appear that up to that time the proceedings of the Council were conducted in private, for on the 22nd January, 1884, a discussion took place as to the advisability of inviting Publicity.

reporters or taking other steps to report the proceedings at Council meetings in the local Press. A motion was submitted that reporters be invited to attend future meetings, but it was ultimately decided to authorise the Secretary to send to the Press an official report of all future meetings such report to contain the name of the member presiding but not the names of other members present nor of individual speeches of members.

The Foreign
Office.

It would appear from the minutes of the Chamber that in 1884 the Foreign Office was very apathetic in regard to commercial interests. Mr. C. M. Kennedy, C.B., of the Foreign Office, wrote to the Chamber stating that he expected to attend the meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce at Wolverhampton, and that during the same week he would be glad to meet the Council of the Birmingham Chamber to discuss foreign commercial matters. The Council accepted the invitation, and took considerable trouble to obtain information to lay before Mr. Kennedy and to secure a satisfactory attendance. The meeting was, no doubt, an interesting one, as a number of important subjects was discussed, but the utmost assistance Mr. Kennedy seemed able to give was that in case of any great anomaly in the customs duty of a foreign country "it was always better to make a representation to the Foreign Government through a correspondent of influence in the particular country to which it referred than for it to be made by the Foreign Office." This was surely the *laissez faire policy* in all its fullness, and we may be grateful that to-day the Foreign Office has a much higher view as to its legitimate functions.

Commercial
Legislation.

The Council continued their recent practice of examining commercial Bills introduced into Parliament, and petitioned the House of Commons in favour of the High Court of Justice Provisional Sittings Bill, the Registration of Firms Bill, the Partnership Acts Consolidation Bill, and the main provision of the Companies' Acts Consolidation Bill, but it seems that owing to the congested state of the order paper which subsequently occurred the whole of these measures were withdrawn.

A Bill entitled the Railway Regulation Acts Amendment Bill was introduced into the House of Commons during this session by the President of the Board of Trade, and read a first time. The Bill was carefully considered by a committee appointed by the Council, who came to the conclusion that some of its clauses would, if passed into law, be detrimental to the interests of traders. The Committee, therefore, recommended the Council to convene a General Meeting of Members to decide what steps should be taken by the Chamber under the circumstances, and the Council subsequently decided to submit the matter to a meeting of "the Railway Freighters of the District." This meeting was held at the Queen's Hotel, when it was unanimously resolved that the Bill be supported provided certain clauses were withdrawn or amended.

Nine of the principal Railway Companies (including the London and North-Western, the Great Western, and the Midland) had given notice of their intention to introduce Bills into Parliament during the session of 1885. These Bills received careful consideration, and the following resolutions were passed by the Council and duly transmitted to the Borough members:—

"That in the opinion of this Council the private Bills about to be introduced into Parliament by nine of the principal Railway Companies will, if passed into law, considerably advance existing maximum rates and also impose additional charges under the name of *station terminals*; and that the Council will therefore offer every opposition in their power to the passage of such Bills through the legislature.

"That a copy of the above resolution be forwarded to each of the three Borough members with a request that he will support the same in the House of Commons."

The Council reported with much satisfaction that the new Standing Orders passed during the year in both Houses of Parliament conferred a *locus standi* on Chambers of Commerce and similar public bodies before Select Committees on Railway Bills. For many years the

Railway
Legislation.

Railway
Companies'
Bills.

Locus Standi
of Chambers
of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce had pressed for this recognition, and during the past thirty years they have made use of it to the great benefit of the commercial community.

**Manchester
Ship Canal.**

The Manchester Ship Canal Bill which had passed the Commons in 1883, after being 39 days before the Select Committee and was rejected by the Lords after 10 days' inquiry, was again introduced in 1884, when the Chamber passed the following resolution and circulated it among other Chambers of Commerce :—

“That as the trade of the country requires greater facilities of international communication, it is desirable, as far as possible, to facilitate the enlargement and improvement of canals and rivers; and with that view the Council of this Chamber heartily approves of the application now before Parliament for powers to carry out the project known as the Manchester Ship Canal.”

The Council again petitioned in favour of the Bill, but it was for a second time rejected by the Lords after being passed by the Commons.

**Postal
Reform.**

The Council gave considerable attention to the question of Postal Reform, and on June 21st addressed a memorial to the Postmaster-General, in which they expressed regret at the proposed delay in the introduction of sixpenny telegrams. They pointed out that rates considerably below the English minimum charge of one shilling had for years been prevalent in nearly all European States, and that the excessive British rate constituted a factor to our detriment in competition with foreign countries. Seeing that the postal surplus was over £3,000,000 per annum, it appeared to the Council incongruous to delay the adoption of a cheaper service, because of a temporary loss of £180,000 which had occurred in the Parcel Post Service, especially as the introduction of sixpenny telegrams would probably have compensated for the temporary loss referred to. The proposed delay, also, the Council urged, showed the prejudicial effect of the practice which had led to the appropriation by the Treasury of almost the entire postal surplus, which, the Council thought should, as to the greater portion, be

devoted to the improvement of the existing and the introduction of new services, in order that the country might enjoy equal advantages and prices to those in operation abroad.

A special meeting of the Chamber was called to consider the Congo Treaty question—a Treaty having been signed between England and Portugal which only awaited the sanction of Parliament. Members trading largely with the part of Africa covered by the Treaty, who knew the country, addressed the meeting, and were unanimous in denouncing the proposed arrangement. It was therefore decided to petition both Houses urging that Parliament should withhold its assent to the ratification of the Treaty. The petition, which was a very long one, dealt somewhat minutely with the matter from the Parliamentary aspect as evidenced by statements previously made by Ministers; and pointed out that eleven Treaties had been made with native chiefs in the Congo district whose treaty rights and those of their native subjects would be compromised and overridden by the new Treaty. Continuing, the Council said that relying upon the assurances given and the action previously taken by the British Government, merchants had invested their capital in the district of the Congo, and British trade being “free from imports, local exactions and restrictions” had extended and prospered. These merchants, therefore, viewed with “extreme anxiety and grave apprehension” the prospect of being placed under the “rule and vexatious laws and regulations of Portugal.” If the Treaty were ratified the Council thought that resistance to its enforcement might be apprehended on the part of the hitherto independent native tribes who would not recognise the Sovereignty of Portugal unless compelled by force of arms, and in such an event warfare and bloodshed would ensue, and the lives and property of European traders would be jeopardised. Petitions against the Treaty were also presented by other Chambers, and public bodies, and the Government, on finding that the trading community was dissatisfied, did not present it to Parliament for ratification.

State of
Trade.

In their annual report the Council again regretted their inability to report any improvement whatever in the trade of the district or the country at large, and stated that prices continued to be unprofitable to the producer, and that, owing to excessive competition, the merchant also had to be content with unremunerative profits.

CHAPTER LVI.

1885.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on February 24th, 25th, and 26th, 1885, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Sampson S. Lloyd, M.P., W. W. Lord, J. W. Tonks, H. L. Muller, H. W. Elliott, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary). Once again the Chamber had no resolution on the programme, although the delegates took an active part in the proceedings.

Railway
Legislation.
Railway
Companies'
Bills.

Situated in the geographical centre of England and Wales it is natural that the Chamber, even in the earlier days, took a prominent part in the consideration of railway questions, the cost of transit being a matter of vital concern. In the session of 1885 the nine Railway Companies referred to in the previous chapter introduced private Bills into the House of Commons for the purpose of obtaining a revision of rates and charges for the conveyance of goods and a re-classification of merchandise. These Bills, the Council of the Chamber reported, proposed in many instances to increase considerably the then existing scale of "Parliamentary Maximum Rates," and also to legalise the imposition of indefinite terminal charges, and were so drafted as to allow the carriers to demand what terminal rates they thought proper, subject only to a costly and troublesome appeal to the

Railway Commissioners' Court. In view of the seriousness of the matter the Council, in conjunction with almost the whole of the Chambers of Commerce in the country and various other public bodies, decided to oppose the Bills by every means in their power, and a petition was thereupon presented to the House of Commons by the President of the Chamber (Mr. P. H. Muntz, M.P.). In their petition the Chamber stated that the attempts of the Railway Companies to add to the "burdens of agriculture and trade" were unwarrantable and "a violation of the public faith in the acts of the several Companies in reliance upon which numerous works have been built and vast expenditure incurred by traders and others."

The Bills referred to were withdrawn, "the intensity of the determined opposition of the trading community and the public" having evidently caused the promoters of the Bills to recognise the fact that it would be quite useless to press them to a second reading.

In 1885 the Manchester Ship Canal Bill was passed Manchester
Ship Canal. through Parliament, and the Council of the Chamber, who had done valuable work in support of the Bill, reported that shortly after its enactment there was "a material reduction of railway rates for the carriage of goods between Manchester and Liverpool." At the time of writing there are few, if any, commercial men who would deny that if to-day we had an efficient and improved system of canals and inland waterways—freed entirely from railway influence or control—the cost of transit would be appreciably diminished without any damage to the interests of the Railway Companies.

In September, 1885, a communication was received Royal
Commission
on
Depression
of Trade. by the Chamber from the Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, which Commission had been appointed in the preceding month. He stated that he was desired by the Commission to forward to them a series of questions which had been drawn up with a view of obtaining information as to the present condition of trade in the country, and of eliciting the facts of the situation into which the Commissioners were directed to inquire. He added that the Commissioners would, of course, prefer to receive answers representing

the unanimous opinion of the Chamber as a whole, but with the view of meeting the case of particular trades or industries, or industries which might form exceptions to the general conditions of the district, they would also be ready to receive separate sets of answers (not exceeding three in number) from any sections of the Chamber, which might for any reason be unable to concur in the answers of the majority.

This communication was considered by the Council at their meeting held on September 16th, when a Committee was appointed to consider the questions and to report to a Special Meeting of the Council, to be convened for that purpose. The Committee held several meetings, and presented their report to the Council on the 30th day of the same month, when, subject to slight amendments, it was approved in the following form, and a resolution passed ordering it to be forwarded to the Royal Commission, with an intimation that the replies to the questions were those of the Council of the Chamber.

“BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

“Questions issued by the Royal Commission on Depression of Trade, with answers to same supplied by the Council of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

“1. Q. : What is the area embraced in the district on which your Chamber is prepared to report ?—A. : The Borough of Birmingham.”

“2. Q. : What trades or industries are of special importance to that district as measured by (a) the amount of capital invested ; (b) the amount of labour employed ; (c) the amount of production ?—A. : The iron, metal, hardware, jewellery, gun, leather, glass, and coal trades.”

“3. Q. : In what proportion do the trades and industries of your district find their market at home, or in foreign countries chiefly.—A. : The relative proportions cannot be ascertained, as the necessary factor (the amount of home consumption) cannot be obtained. The products of this district find markets in all countries where trade is possible.”

“ 4. Q. : How has the trade and industry of your district been affected in the last five years as compared with the periods 1865–70, 1870–5, 1875–80 as regards (a) its volume ; (b) Its gross value ; (c) Its net profit ; (d) the amount of capital invested ; (e) the quantity of labour employed ?—A. : Trade received a great impulse during the period 1870 to 1875, partly through the Franco-German War, which threw the bulk of the carrying trade into the hands of England, and increased greatly the demand for goods for foreign markets, the volume of trade, the value, the net profit, the amount of capital invested, and the labour employed being largely increased. The trade and industry of the district has been much depressed during the years 1880–1885, and before, but the extent of such depression, the loss of profit, the diminution of capital and decreased demand for labour, can only be guessed at, the necessary factors for making any accurate or reliable estimate not being available.”

“ 5. Q. : The phrase ‘ depression of trade ’ would appear to imply a ‘ normal level ’ of trade. During what periods in the last 20 years should you say that trade had been (a) at its normal level ; (b) above that level ; or (c) below it ?—A. : There is no normal level of trade. There was great and unusual activity from 1870 to 1875, and great and almost continuous depression (with one or two intervals) since 1875.”

6. Q. : Judged by a scale constructed in this manner, can the condition of trade and industry, or that of any special trade or industry, in your district at the present time, be fairly described as ‘ depressed ’ ?—A. : Every trade, special or ordinary, can only be described as depressed.”

“ 7. Q. : If so, when did the depression begin ; when did it reach its lowest point ; and what are its most prominent symptoms ?—A. : Distinct depression began in 1876–7. Lowest period during the present year.”

“ 8. Q. : Has its progress hitherto been uniform or irregular ; and what do you anticipate that its course will be in the immediate future ?—A. : Irregular. The Council have no means at their disposal to judge of the immediate future.”

" 9. Q. : Have the different trades and industries affected been uniformly affected (a) in time, and (b) in intensity ?—A. : On the whole uniform in duration and intensity, with occasional short periods of activity in special trades, arising from recent Government requirements, and other exceptional causes."

" 10. Q. : Are there any special circumstances affecting your district to which the existing condition of trade and industry there can be attributed ?—A. : (1) German and Belgian competition ; (2) Foreign import duties on home manufactured goods exported abroad ; (3) the exorbitant cost of carriage of goods from Birmingham to the sea board which has placed inland districts at a great disadvantage compared with maritime towns."

" 11. Q. : Should you say that (a) the demand for ; (b) the supply of ; and (c) the return on, capital in your district is above or below the average of the last 20 years ? —A. : The Council consider this question in its present form is too ambiguous to be dealt with."

" 12. Q. : Is the rate of wages in relation to service rendered, and to the quality and quantity produced (a) for skilled ; (b) for unskilled labour in your district, above or below the average of the last 20 years ?—A. : (a) Maintains its price ; (b) below the average."

" 13. Q. : What measures could, in your opinion, be adopted to improve the existing condition of trade (a) by legislation ; and (b) independently of legislation ?—A. : (1) Fresh legislation on the regulation of railways and railway rates, making minimum rates charged for foreign goods the maximum for home goods, and including the emancipation of canals from the control of the Railway Companies ; (2) the imposition of an import duty on foreign manufactured goods in all cases where the same classes of goods are manufactured in this country ; (3) the formation of a trading union between the Mother country and her Colonies and Dependencies ; (4) the establishment of an international bimetallic currency."

" 14. Q. : To what extent do you consider that the present condition of trade and industry in your district has been affected by the operation of any of the following

causes (a) changes in the relation between capital and labour ; (b) changes in the hours of labour ; (c) changes in the relations between the producer, the distributor, and the consumer ; (d) fall in prices, or appreciation of the standard of value ; (e) the state of the currency and the banking laws ; (f) restriction or inflation of credit ; (g) over-production ; (h) foreign competition ; (k) foreign tariffs and bounties ; (l) incidence of taxation, local or Imperial ; (m) communication with other markets ; (n) legislation affecting trade ; (o) legislation affecting land ?—*A.* : This question demands so large an amount of labour and so much statistical information which the Council have no means of obtaining in their collective capacity, that they can only briefly summarize what are in their opinion some of the principal causes of the present depression : (1) legislative interference with the hours of labour by Factory and Workshops Acts ; (2) foreign competition in neutral markets, the rate of wages and hours of labour in Germany, France, Belgium, and all other manufacturing countries being lower and longer than in this country, except in America ; (3) the influence of trades' unions limiting, if not destroying, freedom of contract between masters and men ; (4) the better technical education of the foreign workman ; (5) the demonetisation of silver by Germany, and the consequent disturbance of the relative values of $15\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 of silver and gold. This has operated most injuriously upon our commercial interests with all other countries having a silver currency—India, China, Japan, South America and others ; (6) the great agricultural depression caused by a long series of bad seasons and foreign competition, resulting in diminished purchasing powers."

A print of the foregoing set of questions and answers was on the following day transmitted to the Royal Commission, and its receipt duly acknowledged.

The following requisition was subsequently presented to the Council :—

"To the Council of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

“ We hereby request you to call a Special Meeting of the Chamber for the following object :—

“ To consider the action taken by the Council in answering on behalf of the Chamber the questions recently addressed to the Chamber by the Royal Commission on Depression of Trade. Also to consider the said questions, and to determine whether any and what answers shall be sent to such questions or any of them.

“ Dated this 3rd day of October, 1885.

“ Thomas Middlemore. John P. Turner.

“ Samuel Booth. C. D. Sturge.

“ G. J. Johnson. George Tangye.”

A Special General Meeting of the Members was held at the Queen's Hotel, Birmingham, on October 21st, 1885, for the purposes specified in the requisition. At this meeting the following resolution was moved and seconded :—

“ That the Chamber desires to express its regret that the Council should have answered the questions issued to the Chamber by the Royal Commission on Depression of Trade without previously submitting the answers to the Chamber for its approval. And that the Chamber, without expressing an opinion on the other answers, strongly disapproves of the answer No. 2 to Question 13.”

Upon which the following amendment was moved and seconded :—

“ That while the members may not individually subscribe to all the answers given to questions asked by the Royal Commission on trade, this Chamber is of opinion that the Council acted wisely in carefully considering the subject and in replying according to its best judgment to the various points proposed.”

The amendment was then put to the meeting, when 46 voted for and 62 against it. The original resolution was then put and carried by a similar majority. A resolution was subsequently passed ordering a copy of the foregoing resolution to be sent to the Royal Commission, which course was adopted.

An invitation having been received by the Council from the Royal Commission to nominate one or more of its members to give oral evidence on the several branches of the Hardware trade as distinguished from the Iron trade, Mr. H. L. Muller, the Chairman of the Chamber, and Messrs. W. Wyley Lord and J. B. Chantrill were appointed, and the two former of these gentlemen gave evidence on October 28th.

A perusal of the detailed minutes of the Council and of the Chamber shows clearly that there was a considerable amount of controversy aroused as between those who were in favour of free imports and those who advocated the imposition of a customs duty on the importation of foreign goods. It would seem that the discussions were very strenuous and that considerable feeling was created between the two sides, although, fortunately, the question of duty or no duty on importations was not then a matter upon which the division between political parties was so acute as it is to-day.

The length of time occupied in the Parliamentary Election held in 1885 was considered by the Council, who expressed the opinion that it was excessive, and, as a result, addressed a memorial to the Home Secretary, urging that an order to minimise the hindrance to trade occasioned by the excitement incidental to General Parliamentary Elections, it was desirable that the period over which they were allowed to extend should be considerably shortened.

As we have seen previously the Chamber had been strenuous in its advocacy of sixpenny telegrams. During 1885 the desired reform was effected by the Postmaster-General, and the Council of the Chamber in their annual report said that it had "given a considerable impetus to the registration of abbreviated addresses." The Council thought that the registration fee for such abbreviated addresses (£1 1s. 0d. per annum) was excessive, and by a memorial to the Postmaster-General urged that it should be considerably reduced. A reply was received stating that the Post Office had satisfied itself that any balance over and above the actual cost incurred in respect of each registration would be far from sufficient to meet

Parliamentary
Elections.

Telegraphic
Addresses.

the loss of revenue arising out of the reduction in the number of words in telegrams which was brought about by the use of telegraphic addresses. Among other things stated in the reply were (1) that the use of abbreviated addresses involved delay ; (2) that the Department would not be acting rightly in encouraging additions to the list of abbreviated addresses ; and (3) that the system was one which the Post Office could never recommend to the public. Seeing that the use of telegraphic addresses has widely extended since 1885 without any inconvenience to the public, and without any recognisable reduction in Post Office revenue, it is clear that the Chamber was well in the forefront of organised commercial activity. No reduction was made in the registration fee, but a considerable extension was afterwards made in the number of telegraphic addresses.

**The Silver
Question.**

The Council on the 7th August, 1885, unanimously passed a resolution urging that a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire into the (then) present relative position of gold and silver in their uses as money throughout the world ; whether the (then) present depression of trade and low prices were in any way connected with or caused by the appreciation of our gold standard ; how far appreciation, "should it be shown to exist," resulted from the displacement of silver money over large areas ; and whether or how far the evil admitted of a remedy. In their annual report the Council stated that this subject had from time to time received the serious attention of the Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and other important Chambers of Commerce, and they hoped that at an early date a Select Committee would be appointed to investigate the question in all its bearings.

For many years the Council of the Chamber had undoubtedly been in favour of a bimetallic currency, and during some part of this period they had advocated it in a definite manner. At general meetings of the Chamber and at meetings of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, however, they had not met with complete success ; and as a result of this their resolutions graduated downwards from the dogmatic to the colourless—showing that, notwithstanding the views of the majority of the

Council, they did not desire to push their opinions down the throats of others. In the case of a mixed body like the Chamber of Commerce, this attitude was no doubt the correct one, and it would have been "churlish" on the part of any member to have severed his connection with the Chamber simply because, on a controversial question, a majority of members of the Council held an opinion with which he did not agree.

In their annual report for this year the Council stated that the commercial negotiations entered into in November, 1883, and continued to April, 1885, between the English and Spanish Governments for the establishment of a Commercial Treaty, suddenly collapsed in May, 1885, "on the ground that the late Ministry in Spain had not fulfilled the engagements entered into on their behalf. The Council regretted the failure of the negotiations, and the fact that Birmingham trade should, in consequence, remain so long subject to such exceptionally high duties as they then had confronting it, and a letter was therefore addressed to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, giving particulars of excessive charges made by the Spanish Customs. From these particulars it appeared that the duties on leather wares varied from £7 12s. 6d. to £65 0s. 6d. per cwt. ; on copper and brass, from 12s. 2d. to £5 1s. 7d. per cwt. ; on iron and steel, from 3s. 3d. to 8s. 2d. per cwt. ; on iron wares (hollow-ware and hardware), from 3s. 0½d. to 9s. 9d. per cwt. ; on iron and steel wares (needles, pens, cutlery, etc.), from £2 0s. 8d. to £6 1s. 11d. per cwt. ; and on arms and ammunition, from £1 4s. 5d. to £10 3s. 3d. per cwt.

The Council also during this year had under consideration the Russian Customs Tariff, it having been reported that certain increases were about to be made in the duties on machinery and metal manufactures. At that time notice of possible changes in Foreign and Colonial Customs Tariff was only published by the Government in the London "Gazette," which was an inaccessible paper owing to its ridiculous cost—a defect which even now has not been remedied. The Council urged that the Board of Trade should from time to time supply the Chamber direct with early information of changes in Foreign

Import Duties, and a reply was subsequently received stating that the question of giving "additional publicity" to particulars of this nature was then under consideration.

Imperial
Federation.

Many other matters were dealt with during 1885, but perhaps the most important was that contained in a memorial addressed to the Earl of Derby (Colonial Secretary), in which reference was made to the advantage which would accrue to Great Britain and her Colonies if the bonds of union between them were strengthened, and there was urged upon the Government the adoption of a "well-considered scheme of Imperial Federation." In the memorial it was stated that the importance of the commercial relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies was evidenced by the amount of trade carried on and the ever growing investments of British capital in schemes for Colonial development. It was also stated that British Colonists shared the feelings and aspirations of Englishmen, and would, naturally, be happier and more prosperous (commercially, socially, and nationally) under the British Empire than as members of isolated States or Republics; that British Colonies were gradually becoming too important in themselves to be governed on the system that had hitherto obtained; and that, given a greater participation in the responsibilities and cost of Imperial Government, a deeper sense of interest by the Colonies in the honour, welfare, and prosperity of the Empire as a whole would assuredly follow. Continuing, the Council in the memorial said that a closer unity of commercial interest between the Mother Country and the Colonies appeared to be further called for through various European Powers excluding British and Colonial produce from their markets by tariff barriers, and entering into more direct competition with our foreign trade, while the United States of America (to which the stream of emigration of skilled labour from this country had latterly been particularly directed) were showing a disposition to discourage the investment of British capital and the acquisition of land by British citizens within their territories; and that under these circumstances the national pride, as well as interest, would seem to demand that the movement of emigration should be directed

to our own Colonies. The concluding paragraph of the memorial was as follows :—

“ That while your petitioners would sincerely wish to see the Colonies, as well as the Mother Country, perfectly free to adopt such fiscal systems as each may deem suitable to its own circumstances, they believe it is possible to arrive at some method of combined federal action, whereby the unity of the Empire may be assured, effectual safeguards provided for the large interests involved, a feeling of loyalty to each other and to the Throne preserved, and a splendid future ensured for that ‘ Great Britain beyond the Seas ’ conjointly with the development of the resources of each Colony, and an extension of the commerce and industry of the Mother Country.”

The Council, therefore, prayed that communications might be addressed to the Government of each Colony, inviting their earnest consideration of the subject, with a view to eliciting an interchange of opinion.

It will, the writer thinks, be generally agreed by the readers of this volume—regardless of their views from a party political standpoint—that the memorial, the contents of which have just been outlined, constituted a very striking declaration on a matter of Imperial concern. The men who made it were not all of one party colour, but were men who first of all were interested in the welfare of the British Empire in general, and of the United Kingdom in particular. They made this important pronouncement, it must be remembered, at a time when the modern Imperial spirit was in its infancy. They made no suggestion of inter-Imperial Free Trade or of Preferential Tariffs—these questions were not then so prominent as they are to-day—they merely showed, as clearly as they could, that they had a very high sense of the importance, responsibilities, and advantages of Empire in an age of acute international competition, and of the need for conference between officially accredited representatives of the British Dominions. Such conferences have since taken place, and the interests of the Empire have been thereby promoted to the great advantage of every inhabitant of the Imperial Dominions. During the past

decade the discussion of Empire matters has only too often involved party controversy, but the writer feels convinced that every word of the declaration of 1885 would be approved by one and all of the members of the Chamber to-day—whatever their views may be on any political question from a purely party standpoint. Had the declaration been made even in 1913 it could not have been questioned, because there is not a word in it to which either of the great political parties of to-day could, or would, object ; but the writer calls special attention to it in this work because it was made long before the present controversies arose and at a time when the social and economic possibilities of Empire were being realised in only an imperfect degree ; and also because it shows how closely and accurately the trend of affairs was being watched by the Chamber.

Trade with
Tibet.

If the “man in the street” were asked to-day as to the possibilities of trade with Tibet he would probably reply by raising his eyebrows and saying nothing, but it is, nevertheless, on record that in 1885 the Chamber knew a good deal more about the matter, for they advocated by memorial to the Foreign and India Offices the giving of facilities to British trade by opening a “trade route” from Calcutta to Tibet *via* Darjeeling. In this memorial the Chamber pointed out that whilst the mountain ranges on the east of Tibet were almost “impassible,” and rendered access from South China possible only by a circuitous route to the North, the Jeylep Pass, on the frontier of Tibet, 96 miles only from Darjeeling, was of all passes in the whole Himalayan range the least elevated, of the easiest gradient, the only one never closed in winter, and the most accessible from both ends. They also stated that hardware and other goods made in Birmingham and district were in considerable demand in Tibet, and that the Tibetians could give in exchange “fine wools” produced in the country. The Foreign Office acknowledged this memorial, and within less than a fortnight sent another letter stating that Her Majesty’s Government were fully alive to the importance of the question and were not without hope that measures in the direction suggested by the Chamber would shortly be found possible.

In their annual report the Council expressed regret that the general trade of the district remained in "the same depressed condition" as it had been for several years past, but hoped that the "forthcoming report of the Royal Commission" would throw some light upon the causes and suggest remedies. They were further of opinion that commercial questions demanded "an increased attention at the hands of the legislature."

State of
Trade.

CHAPTER LVII.

1886.

The Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce was held in London on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th February, 1886, when the Chamber was represented by Mr. H. L. Muller, Mr. J. W. Tonks, Mr. H. Hawkes, Mr. H. W. Elliott, Mr. S. S. Lloyd, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

A resolution was moved by the Derby Chamber to the effect that the Association of Chambers of Commerce was of opinion that this country should, without further delay, adopt a policy of retaliation against those countries which did not grant to British goods "the terms conceded to the most favoured nation." Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd and Mr. H. Hawkes (on behalf of Birmingham) moved and seconded an amendment to omit the words placed in parenthesis and substitute the words "fairly reciprocal fiscal treatment." The amendment was lost by 50 votes to 8, and the original motion was subsequently rejected.

Fair Trade.

At the same meeting Mr. J. W. Tonks moved on behalf of the Chamber a resolution to the effect that interest in excess of 20 per cent. per annum should not be recoverable on money lent on the security of Bills of Sale, and that the Bills of Sale Act (1882) should be amended accordingly. The resolution met with some opposition, but was eventually carried by 49 votes to 21.

Bills of Sale.

**Autumnal
Meeting of
Association.**

The Autumnal Meeting of the Association was held at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, on the 8th July, 1886, and the Chamber was represented by Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Tonks.

**Federation
with Colonial
Chambers.**

Mr. Sampson S. Lloyd was called upon to open a discussion as to what method could be adopted to federate the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire so that they might be mutually helpful in all questions affecting their common interests. After a very interesting speech he suggested the appointment of a Committee to draw up a scheme. His suggestion was unanimously adopted.

**Parliamentary
Bills.**

In their annual report for 1886 the Council again expressed regret that "political matters and another General Election" had prevented commercial questions receiving such attention in Parliament as their importance to the welfare of the country demanded. A few Bills dealing with commercial matters were, however, introduced early in the year, and these were considered by the Special Committee appointed by the Council. As a result of the reports of this Committee petitions were presented in favour of certain Bills and against others, the latter including the Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bills (Nos. 1 and 2), which, it was held, contained principles inimical to commercial interests and interfering with the liberty of contract between master and workmen. The Bill was ultimately dropped.

**Railway
Legislation.**

A Railway and Canal Traffic Bill was introduced early in the session, and the Council petitioned in its favour, but suggested certain important points requiring amendment, viz. :—That in any reconstruction of the Railway Commission Court the President or other legal Commissioner should be a permanent member of the Court (presumably so as to preserve some sort of continuity in its decisions); that the proposed right of appeal to the House of Lords would take away one of the chief merits of the Court from the traders' point of view; that the proposed legalisation of terminal charges was objectionable; and that one of the clauses would legalise preferential rates as a Railway Company could always plead that a "certain rate was necessary to obtain traffic."

The Chamber had for some years taken an active interest in the Spanish Customs Tariff, and in their annual report for 1886 they were able to state that on the 26th April, 1886, a Convention had been adopted between this country and Spain with "this most satisfactory result, that our merchants and traders can now carry on business with that country on the most favoured nation footing." They expressed the hope that this would enable the United Kingdom to regain, in a great measure, the extensive trade that formerly existed between English and Spanish mercantile houses. It would appear, however, that when the Convention first became operative many manufacturers and shippers of Birmingham and district trading with Spain experienced some difficulty by reason of certificates of origin being required by the Spanish Custom House Authorities on special descriptions of goods. The matter was considered by the Council, and they subsequently addressed a letter to the Foreign Office asking them to urge the Spanish Government to abolish all certificates of origin on British goods, and to take such steps as they may deem expedient, as opportunity arises, to impress on Foreign Governments the advisability of abolishing certificates of origin on British goods generally. As might have been expected a reply was received from the Foreign Office that certificates of origin were necessary in the case of British goods entitled to the benefit of the Conventional Tariff, but the Foreign Office stated that communications had been entered into with the Spanish Government with the view of simplifying the forms of certificate and reducing the charges therefor. The Council added that changes had since been made which, to a great extent, removed the difficulties previously complained of.

In December, 1886, the Council addressed a letter to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (the Earl of Iddesleigh) calling his attention to the new Roumanian Customs Tariff, and to the injurious effect it must necessarily have on the trade of the Birmingham district with that country. A comprehensive statement was enclosed showing the very large increases of duty made

Spanish
Tariff.

Roumanian
Tariff.

under the new tariff, and a concrete case was furnished in connection with ornamented iron bedsteads, in which it was said that a Birmingham merchant trading with Roumania had recently consigned to that country a case of these bedsteads, the weight of which was 35cwt., and the value £31 sterling. The old tariff rate on these goods was 7 per cent. *ad valorem*—equivalent to £2 5s. 0d.; whilst the new tariff rate was 30 francs per 100 kilos—equivalent to £19 10s. 0d. In their reply the Foreign Office simply referred to the case of the bedsteads—omitting all reference to the other group of articles mentioned by the Chamber—but in the instance referred to the result was partly satisfactory to Birmingham, as it was stated that under a treaty with Roumania the duty on iron bedsteads would be 8 francs 5 centimes per 100 kilos—a considerable reduction on that originally fixed in the tariff

Bimetallism.
The Silver
Question.

In their annual report for 1886 the Council stated that they had previously expressed the hope that the silver question—"the very important question of bi-metallism"—which was incidentally considered by the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade, might, at an early date, be made the subject of an exhaustive inquiry by a Select Committee or Royal Commission expressly appointed for the purpose. They were, therefore, glad that the currency question, which had, for so many years, received their attention, had then, on the recommendation of the Commission on the Depression of Trade, been referred to a Special Royal Commission, consisting of gentlemen of great authority, who were taking evidence on the subject generally. In May, 1886, they presented to the First Lord of the Treasury (The Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone) a memorial urging the appointment of such a Commission, in which they stated that there existed a wide-spread and severe depression of trade, industry, and agriculture "throughout the United Kingdom and the whole world." This depression, they believed, was "not so much due to a decrease in the amount or volume of trade as to a great falling-off in the market price of manufactures and produce." The decline in price, it was asserted, had continued for some years, and showed no indications of abatement, but rather a

further tendency to fall. A similar decline in prices had "extended to land, heritable, and shipping property in general," and the total result had been to disturb the "commercial equilibrium" which previously existed, "to check industry, paralyse labour, and to press with great hardship on the poorer classes of the community."

Continuing their memorial, the Council stated that there was a very general and growing opinion among those best qualified to judge that the continuous fall in prices and consequent commercial and agricultural depression had been largely caused by the demonetisation of silver in Europe; that so far back as 1876 a Parliamentary Committee had enquired into the cause of the fall in the value of silver, but did not suggest a remedy; and that the result of inquiries, instituted about the same time by the Congress of the United States, was the expression of a confident opinion that "as the legislative action of certain Governments in demonetising silver had alone caused the disturbance of the old equilibrium, the remedy could only be found in an international agreement in regard to the monetary medium." An International Monetary Conference met at Paris in 1878, and "the voice of Great Britain at that Monetary Conference supported the unanimous decision then come to that the interests of all countries required the 'rehabilitation of silver.'" In order to give effect to this decision the Paris Monetary Conference of 1881 was summoned (at which the Governments of Great Britain, India, and Canada were represented), and at this Conference the representative of British India offered, on behalf of his Government, that they would keep their mint open to the "free coinage of silver at the ratio of $15\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 of gold if any considerable number of European States would do so also." The British Government "practically admitted that the proposal of the Government of British India would, if adopted, secure the monetary stability so much desired," and the "heads of the great European Banks, the Governors of the Bank of England, Bank of France, Bank of Germany, Netherlands, [and] Italy all favoured the proposal." The adhesion of Great Britain would, it was felt, ensure that of all the great states of the world.

The Chamber continued that they looked with serious anxiety "upon the continuance of the present anomalous position occupied by this country, whereby gold was the standard at home" and silver the standard in our Indian Empire—"a position most unusual and unsatisfactory, both commercially and politically." The unity of the Empire, it was contended, demanded the unity of its monetary system; and the then existing state of things was becoming "intolerable and dangerous to all interests." The Chamber did not urge a "mere return" to the fortuitous monetary system which prevailed for more than fifty years prior to 1873, but were of opinion that the experience of that period and the suffering which had since ensued, were sufficient for the purpose of experiment.

Chinese
Tools.

In November, 1886, a number of "common implements of industry" in daily use in the agricultural districts of China were forwarded to the Chamber by the Foreign Office for exhibition. By order of the Council they were placed in the Birmingham Exchange, and the fact of their being on view was made known by advertisement and circulars addressed to local Edge Tool Manufacturers, many of whom inspected the tools and made drawings and models for future use. The Council regarded this new departure of the Foreign Office in the interests of British trade as an indication of further efforts in the same direction which were greatly to be desired, as such action would tend to dispel the belief then widely existent that "our representatives abroad" did not interest themselves in commercial matters to the extent that merchants and manufacturers thought desirable, having regard to the great and ever increasing activity of the representatives of other nations, which had "become keen competitors with us for business in neutral markets."

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

The first Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, convened by the London Chamber, was held on the 6th and 7th July, 1886, when there was a large attendance of delegates, including five from the Birmingham Chamber. The following appeared on the agenda:—

“The Silver Question.—That the silver question be remitted to the consideration of the Congress, and that the resolution of the Birmingham Chamber, as sent, be included on the programme without prejudicing the Congress to its conclusions.”

Birmingham resolution :—

“This Congress recognises that the diminishing supply of gold during recent years has been an important factor in the existing depression of trade, and believes that the remonetisation of silver would offer some relief to this state of things.”

After a long discussion the resolution was carried by 28 votes to 15, each Chamber counting as one vote.

A communication was received from the Belfast Chamber of Commerce on the subject of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland, and the Council, after considering the matter, presented a petition to the House of Commons, urging that the Bill might not pass into law, as they were satisfied that so far from promoting the prosperity of the United Kingdom “it would tend to the practical disruption of the union between Great Britain and Ireland,” and be productive of consequences disastrous to the mercantile interests of both countries. It should not be assumed from this that the Chamber entered into party politics—for these were rigidly excluded by the rules, and, as is well known, the question was one which produced a change in parties that has endured to this day.

The Council regretted to state that they could not report any general or material improvement in the trade of the district, and expressed the opinion that though the volume of trade might have somewhat increased the results as regarded profits had, especially in the large and staple industries of the district, been impaired, if not destroyed, by severe competition among the traders themselves, aggravated to an increasingly-important extent by foreign competition.

Home Rule
for Ireland.

State of
Trade.

CHAPTER LVIII.

1887.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Messrs. J. W. Tonks, Sampson S. Lloyd, H. W. Elliott, W. W. Lord, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary) represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on the 8th, 9th, and 10th February, 1887, at which a Special Committee was appointed to watch the important legislative proposals then pending with regard to the laws relating to railway and canal traffic, and to co-operate with the Executive Council with a view to securing such alterations and amendments as might be deemed necessary in the interests of the commercial classes. Mr. H. W. Elliott was appointed as a member of this Committee.

Commercial
Legislation.

The Council petitioned Parliament against the Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bill, which, it was urged, would interfere with the liberty of contract between master and workmen; against the Early Closing of Shops Bill, which, it was stated, proposed to interfere with adult male labour, by compelling a minority of shopkeepers trading in a certain district to close their place of business against their will at the request of the majority and by order of the local authority; against the Private Bill Legislation Bill, which proposed to appoint three Parliamentary Commissioners to whom Private Bills would be referred instead of to Select Committees as was then the practice; and in favour of the Bills of Exchange (Summary Judgment) Bill, which proposed to provide for the registration of dishonoured Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes and to allow summary judgment thereon. Petitions were also presented in favour of the Registration of Firms Bill, the Partnership Law Consolidation and Amendment Bill, and the Limited Partnerships Bill. None of these Bills were, however, passed into law during the session.

In the year 1885 nine of the principal railway companies introduced Bills into the House of Commons, with the object of increasing the then existing scale of Parliamentary maximum charges and legalising the imposition of indefinite terminal charges. These proposals caused grave alarm among the commercial classes who had for some years had experience of what railway companies were able to do by closer co-operation, and had found that their united action usually tended to the detriment of the trade. The commercial community; therefore, became quickened into unusual activity, and the Chamber, in conjunction with other Chambers and public bodies throughout the country, brought very great pressure to bear on the House of Commons, with the result that the promoters of these Bills withdrew them, realising that it would be quite useless to attempt to carry them to a second reading owing to the determined attitude adopted by the commercial public. This was not enough, however. Confident in the possession of their monopolies the railway companies had for a long time been gradually squeezing the public, and the Chambers of Commerce felt that the time was ripe for legislation, limiting the excessively wide powers of the companies in regard to rates, charges, and conditions, and providing for more definite control in the national interest. In 1886, as a result of all this pressure Mr. Mundella, M.P., introduced as a Government measure a Railway and Canal Traffic Bill—the general principles of which the Council of the Chamber approved. This Bill was, however, withdrawn before the close of the session. In 1887 another attempt was made to deal with this important subject, and the Railway and Canal Traffic Bill was introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Stanley (President of the Board of Trade). The Council found that, although this Bill was in many respects an improvement on previous Bills dealing with the question, it was not by any means satisfactory in regard to terminals. A petition was therefore presented to Parliament, urging certain amendments, which were regarded as necessary, but the Bill shared the same fate as the previous attempts, and

Railway
Legislation.

was withdrawn, as the time at the disposal of the Government was insufficient for the adequate discussion of its numerous clauses.

Canal
Develop-
ment.

In their petition to Parliament with regard to the Railway and Canal Traffic Bill, the Council inserted a suggestion that clauses should be added authorising public bodies and local authorities to borrow money and to form public trusts for the purposes of acquiring and constructing canals; and during the year they gave considerable attention to this matter, and appointed delegates to co-operate with various other bodies in pressing forward the development of the canal system.

Fair Trade.

On the 14th March, 1887, a special meeting of the Chamber was held to receive a deputation from the National Fair Trade League. After listening to the addresses delivered by the members of the deputation, a resolution was moved expressing the cordial thanks of the Chamber to the speakers, and approving of their recommendations in favour of a change in the fiscal policy of the country. An amendment was moved for the omission of the latter part of the resolution, but this was lost by a large majority. About this time an invitation had been addressed to Mr. Joseph Chamberlain to accept the office of President of the Chamber. After expressing his acknowledgment of the invitation, Mr. Chamberlain, on the 17th May, 1887, wrote :—

“I regret that I do not feel justified in complying with this request. I believe that I am right in saying that the Chamber has recently adopted a resolution in favour of Fair Trade, and, as I am opposed to protection in any shape or form, I could not, with propriety accept the post to which the Council are good enough to invite me.”

Mr. Chamberlain added, however, that he would be happy to present any petitions which the Chamber might from time to time send to him for that purpose.

Sugar
Bounties.

The condemnation of the system of bounties on exported sugar, and the recommendation that in all countries in which a duty is levied on sugar, it should be refined in bond, which were the results of an International Sugar Conference held in 1887, met with the cordial

approval of the Council, who stated in their annual report that the recommendations of the Conference, if adopted by the several Governments represented thereat, would doubtless be the means of removing much of the irritation that existed and would tend to strengthen international commercial relations.

At the request of the London Chamber of Commerce the Council considered the advisability of urging the Government to adopt a system of decimal coinage, and, after discussing the subject in all its bearings, came to the conclusion that the adoption by this country of a decimal coinage, coupled with a decimal system of weights and measures, would meet with their hearty approval; but that, in their opinion, it was inexpedient to agitate for the former unless it were accompanied by a decimal system of weights and measures.

Decimal
Coinage and
Weights and
Measures.

A communication was received from H.M. Secretary for War, stating that it would appear that a desire existed in some quarters that the prices quoted in tenders accepted by the War Office should be published instead of being treated as strictly confidential. The Secretary of State was therefore anxious to ascertain how far this desire was prevalent among the manufacturers of the country, and he requested that the Chamber would be good enough to cause enquiries to be made among the leading manufacturers, with a view to finding out whether they considered the publication of the prices at which orders were placed would be to the advantage of the service, of the contractors themselves, and of the community at large. He added that it was desirable that the views of both army and navy contractors should be obtained. Exhaustive enquiries were at once made by the Council, from which it appeared that twenty-six contractors were in favour and fifty against the publication of prices. The Council communicated this result to the War Office, and expressed the view that it was undesirable that such prices should be publicly declared.

Army and
Navy
Contracts.

In their annual report the Council stated that the time had not yet arrived when they could congratulate traders "on the return of that prosperity which has been so long delayed and so anxiously hoped for." While it was

State of
Trade.

true that in the metal trades most important advances in prices had been obtained during the closing months of 1887, these were to be attributed "not to the pressure or call of improving demand" but to the "speculative action of a foreign syndicate," which they greatly feared would "tend eventually to derange and possibly to divert to foreign control the very important interests" which were, by such action, so materially affected. The Council added that they were not, however, without hope that if the attention of the Imperial Parliament were brought unremittingly to bear upon the great questions of the reduction of railway rates and the extension of canal communication, the depression which had so long existed in the trade of the district might be "in the future by wise legislation" greatly relieved.

CHAPTER LIX.

1888.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on February 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, 1888, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. W. Tonks, Sampson S. Lloyd, Ralph Heaton, T. J. Walsh, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary). No resolutions were moved by the Birmingham Chamber, but at the Autumnal Meeting held at Cardiff in the same year the following resolution was moved on behalf of the Chamber and carried :—

Canal Devel-
opment.

"That having regard to the continuous development of canal construction in Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland, and to the importance of this question if England is to maintain her manufacturing and commercial position, a deputation representing this Association be appointed to wait upon the President of the Board of Trade, urging him, without delay,

to promote legislation for the improvement and extension of canal navigation within the United Kingdom."

By moving this resolution the Chamber showed once more that, it was far-sighted, and few of the leaders of industry in the year 1888 could have even dreamt that in 1913, twenty-five years afterwards, notwithstanding the influential recommendations of a Royal Commission appointed in 1906, the country would still have been urging the Government to do something to prevent the gradual extinction of the canals and inland waterways of the country as alternative means of transport. Yet, unfortunately, so it is even at the time of writing these *Chronicles*, although the Chambers of Commerce, led on many occasions by Birmingham, have not for twenty-five years only, but for nearly half-a-century been calling the attention of the powers that be to the necessity for definite action. When, however, the time comes—and come it undoubtedly will—that the Government is absolutely forced to take action to prevent sheer disaster to the trade of the country, it must not be forgotten that the Chamber of Commerce, in season and out of season, consistently urged the adoption of some system for the development of the canals and inland waterways of the country, and pressed its views with all the force at its command not only on Governments and Parliaments who were eager to fight party political battles, but also on traders who were a pathetic and apparently indifferent to their own interests.

A deputation from the Association of Chambers of Commerce duly waited upon the President of the Board of Trade (Sir Michael Hicks-Beach), who, in the course of his reply, said it would not be possible for any one to propose definite legislation without first having before him the real facts as to the then present condition of the canals. These facts, he said, were not known to anybody, but they would be obtained under the powers of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1888). When those facts had been mastered, he added, they would see what canals were free, what canals were prosperous or bankrupt, and what canals were in the hands of railway companies ;

and if State purchase should be considered the best way they would also know which canals the State could buy, and at what price it could purchase them, and the Government could then judge whether any great scheme of the sort could be undertaken with useful and satisfactory financial results.

Commercial
Legislation.

In this year the Chamber became more active than ever before in regard to the consideration of legislative proposals submitted to Parliament. Nine meetings of the Commercial Bills Committee were held during the session, and no less than eighteen measures came under consideration and formed the subject of various reports submitted to the Council. Petitions were presented to Parliament in favour of the Registration of Firms Bill, the Steam Engines and Boilers Bill, the Rating of Machinery Bill, the Partnership Bill, the Technical Instruction Bill, the Bills of Exchange Registration Bill, the Limited Partnership Bill, and the Companies' Bill. The Early Closing Bill was again opposed by petition, as were also the Employers' Liability for Injuries to Workmen Bill, the Employers' Liability Act (1880) Amendment Bill (No. 2), and certain sections of the Technical Education Bill, which proposed to authorise local authorities to override School Boards in matters of technical education, and to establish scholarships at the cost of the rates.

Railway and
Canal Traffic
Bill.

The most important Bill considered by the Chamber during 1888 was the Railway and Canal Traffic Bill, which was subsequently passed into law as a result of the overwhelming pressure brought to bear on the Government and on Parliament by the Chambers of Commerce and other public bodies. A special meeting of the Chamber was held to consider the Bill, and it was unanimously decided to petition in its favour and to urge the local members of Parliament to vote for it. A deputation from the Council subsequently waited upon the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., and placed fully before him the views of the Chamber. Some suggestions were made for the amendment of certain portions of the Bill, but, as might have been expected, few of these were accepted,

it being of the most vital importance to the welfare of the country that the Bill should be passed into law without delay.

Letters were addressed to local members of Parliament with regard to the Employers' Liability for Injuries to Workmen Bill, with the view of showing that if the Bill were passed into law without serious amendments being made it would be "so vague and uncertain" as to lead to "endless litigation," and would thus tend to hamper many trades, involving personal risk through carelessness or inattention, while injuring good relations between employers and employed." The Council urged that, failing a satisfactory adjustment of differences, the Bill should be deferred or referred to a Select Committee, and the Employers' Liability Act of 1880, which would otherwise lapse, be kept alive by means of a short continuing Act. This plan, they urged, would be a better one, both for employers and employed, than the hurrying through Parliament of a piece of complex legislation, "opening up fresh differences between master and workmen, promising only a fruitful crop of litigation, and tending to discourage the expenditure of capital in British industrial enterprises." The Bill was ultimately withdrawn, and the Act of 1880 was continued in accordance with the Chambers' suggestion.

A letter was received from the Foreign Office transmitting an extract from a Portuguese Royal Order, directing the General Board of Customs, in view of the expiration in 1892 of the Treaty of Commerce between Portugal and France, to obtain the necessary information for drawing up the draft of a new General Customs Tariff, which might serve as a basis for commercial negotiations between Portugal and foreign countries. The Foreign Office asked the Chamber for their observations, and a letter was subsequently sent in reply forwarding a list of articles manufactured in the Birmingham district, the duties charged in Portugal upon which were regarded as excessive, and in many cases practically prohibitive. The goods referred to included glass and glass-ware, nails, manufactured iron, iron-wares, tin-wares, cutlery, manufactured steel, brass and copper manufactures,

Employers'
Liability.

Portuguese
Customs
Tariff.

pins, hooks and eyes, guns, revolvers, pistols, gold and silver watches, trunks, portmanteaus, bags, game bags, buttons, bellows, pocket books, cigar cases, purses, etc. A letter was subsequently received from the Foreign Office stating that a copy of the Chamber's letter had been sent to his Majesty's Charge d'Affaires at Lisbon, with instructions to take such action as he properly could to give effect to the representations made. His Majesty's Charge d'Affaires afterwards reported that he had laid the letter before the Portuguese Government, requesting that it be considered in order that such reductions might, if possible, be made in the Customs duties on the articles referred to as would promote trade between this country and Portugal.

**Russian
Customs
Tariff.**

A communication was received from the Foreign Office stating that an Official Committee would probably be appointed in Russia at an early date to consider the question of the revision of the Customs Tariff and Customs Regulations; and that, although there was no probability of a considerable reduction being made in the import duties, it was expected that the classification would be considered, and it was hoped that reasonable representations would receive careful attention. The letter added that suggestions showing how special difficulties caused by the then existing classification or by the regulations for ships' entry, Bills of lading, etc., might be removed, might therefore, with advantage, be put forward, and that her Majesty's representative at St. Petersburg would be instructed to bring to the knowledge of the proper authorities any suggestions the Chamber might have to offer. The information asked for by the Foreign Office was collected without delay, and by means of the Foreign Office was transmitted to the British Ambassador.

**Budget
Proposals.**

A special meeting of the Chamber was held on the 23rd April to consider the Budget proposals of her Majesty's Ministers, of which there were a considerable number. It was resolved:—

- “ (1) That the proposed duty of £1 on every vehicle over 10cwt., and a duty of 2/6 per wheel on every vehicle over 2cwt., used solely for business

purposes, will be most detrimental to the trading interests of the country."

- " (2) That this Chamber approves of the increased taxation of wine imported in bottles, and trusts that Parliament will refuse to admit any foreign interference in the matter."

Petitions embodying the terms of these resolutions were subsequently presented to the House of Commons by the President of the Chamber.

In the annual report of the Council they said that, while in their opinion there had been a gratifying increase in the volume of trade throughout the city and district, with every prospect of such increase being fairly maintained in the near future, still the fact that prices generally ruled so low as to permit of only a very small margin of profit on the total output showed that the manufacturers and merchants of the Midlands were "as yet only on the eve of better times." The Council added that it was possible that the artificial enhancing of the prices of certain metals might not be much longer maintained and that they considered it a healthy sign that "rings" and "syndicates" were powerless permanently to control great staple articles of commerce and manufacture. The hostile tendencies of foreign markets in respect to tariffs, and the unrelieved depression in the value of silver, which affected so seriously the purchasing power of silver-using countries, were, however, continuous hindrances to the development of trade.

In concluding their report on the state of trade, the Council referred to the Schedules of Rates and Charges which had been issued by the Railway Companies in pursuance of the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1888). The earnest attention of every member of the Chamber was drawn "to the magnitude of the additional burdens," with which they threatened every Midland industry, and the Council expressed the view that if endorsed in their then present form they would place every trader in the city and district at the mercy of the railway companies; would hamper and "disarrange inland manufactures"; would "compel many local industries to migrate to the seaboard," and

State of
Trade.

Railway
Rates and
Charges.

would probably "in the end prove a suicidal policy on the part of the railway carriers themselves." The alarm to which expression was given by the Chamber was shared throughout the country, and the railway companies had subsequently to accept much more reasonable—but still very high—schedules of rates and charges.

CHAPTER LX.

1889.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on March 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1889, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. H. W. Elliott, Sampson S. Lloyd, W. W. Lord, T. J. Walsh, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Bimetallism.

Mr. Henry W. Elliott, on behalf of the Chamber, moved at the meeting referred to in the previous paragraph:—

"That the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the recent changes in the relative values of the precious metals, having issued their final report, it is the duty of this Association, by means of a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge Her Majesty's Government to approach France, Germany, and the United States with a view to a conference being held for the discussion of the establishment, by international agreement, of a free coinage of silver."

In moving the resolution, Mr. Elliott stated that of the Royal Commission which had been appointed to consider this matter six were on one side and six on the other; but that the whole twelve were unanimous in recommending discussion, consideration by the Government, and international conference. He added that even the six members of the Commission who might be regarded at least likely to agree to any changes in the currency system of Great Britain reported that there could not be

“two opinions as to the very serious effect which the continued fall in the gold price of silver had had on the finances of the Government of India.” The motion was very influentially supported, but, ultimately, was rejected on a vote by Chambers by 45 votes to 11.

Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary) on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber, moved at the same meeting:—

Canal Development.

“That the Executive Council be requested to arrange for a deputation to the President of the Board of Trade to urge upon the Government the desirability of steps being taken to acquire the waterways of England and Ireland, with a view to an improved and cheapened system of inland transport for heavy goods.”

Considerable discussion ensued as to the inclusion of the words “and Ireland,” which Mr. Haydon explained had been inserted at the suggestion of the Dublin Chamber, and ultimately an amendment, which was moved to omit them, was carried. The debate was then continued, but ultimately the resolution was lost by a considerable majority—showing that the Association needed a good deal of education before it could pass resolutions such as those adopted in the twentieth century, when the canal question became more generally acute.

Legislative proposals affecting commerce and industry were again very carefully considered, and the Council once more expressed regret that the crop of actual legislation of any value to the commercial community was only a very light one—the measures passed being comparatively unimportant. They duly petitioned in favour of or against a number of Bills which they approved or to which they objected as being advantageous or detrimental to the commercial community, and it is partly satisfactory to note that none of the Bills to which they objected was passed into law. It is interesting to note here that one of the Bills which the Council petitioned against was the Mines (Eight Hours) Bill, which was *not* passed into law, but became a hardy annual until, half-way through the first decade of the twentieth century, the Government took the matter up and secured the enactment of a Bill which was

Commercial Legislation.

Railway
Rates and
Charges.

practically unanimously objected to by the Chambers of Commerce—an Act which admittedly has proved to be of little or no advantage to the persons in whose supposed interests it was passed, but of serious detriment to the commercial classes who are the great users of coal.

The Council reported that during the year the proceedings taken under the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1888) had received their careful and constant attention. A special meeting of the Council was called, immediately on receipt from the Board of Trade of the proposed revised classification of merchandise traffic and revised schedules of maximum rates and charges applicable thereto proposed to be charged by the railway companies. As a result of the consideration given to the subject by this meeting the Secretary issued to the members of the Chamber a circular letter acquainting them with the steps to be taken to lodge objections to the proposed classification of goods and schedules of maximum rates, and stating that a general meeting of the Chamber would be convened at an early date to consider the matter. The special general meeting of the Chamber referred to was held on the 28th February, 1889, when an opinion was unanimously expressed that the revised rates proposed by the railway companies were exorbitant, and would, if adopted, seriously affect the interests of the traders of the district. A Committee was thereupon appointed to prepare on behalf of the Chamber a statement of objections to the revised classification, and also to the schedules of maximum rates and charges "in a certain number of well-defined cases"—such statement to be "submitted to the Council prior to delivery to the Board of Trade and the Secretaries of the Railway Companies." The Committee appointed for the purpose consisted of Mr. Ralph Heaton, Mr. J. William Tonks, Mr. F. Ash, Mr. W. Barker, Mr. H. W. Elliott, Mr. D. J. Kempson, Mr. Jabez Lones, Mr. G. F. Lyndon, Mr. John C. Onions, Mr. W. Priest, Mr. T. J. Walsh, and Mr. T. N. Whitehead. A meeting of the Committee was held within seven days of its appointment, when the Secretary was instructed to communicate with the large manufacturers of the town, asking them to supply for the guidance of the Committee a statement showing how the

proposed schedules, if adopted, would affect their particular trades. As a result of the replies received a letter was addressed to the Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach (now Lord St. Aldwyn), President of the Board of Trade, stating that, in the submission of their various objections, they desired to urge upon the Board of Trade the earnest consideration of the following points, viz. :—

- “(1) That the Railway Companies on the one hand are able by combination to become monopolists—thus placing the whole trading community at their mercy up to the extreme limits of whatever charges may be legalised.”
- “(2) That, on the other hand, the clients of the Companies comprise not only those who, being large freighters, are able to conduct their own case as prescribed by the Act, but also a vast majority of smaller merchants, traders, and manufacturers who are incapable of, individually, self-defence, yet whose interests would be affected disastrously by an increase in railway rates.”
- “(3) That in contradiction to the spirit and intention of the Act, the Railway Companies, in abuse of their powers, had set up pretensions in wanton disregard to the present rates or to the equitable claims of the trading public.”
- “(4) That the Railway Companies offer no reasons why their proposed increases are necessary or just, nor are such reasons apparent in any of their published proceedings; that therefore the Chamber would urge upon the President of the Board of Trade that no increased charge, in any form, should be admitted unless fully submitted and justified by evidence; and that the special rates previously accorded to imported merchandise should be carefully taken into account.”
- “(5) That beyond the enormous increase of rates the Companies had greatly aggravated the situation by seizing on every available opportunity to make other large and vexatious

exactions—such as the advancement of classification, the outrageous innovations with regard to smalls, and the omission of defined charges for carting.”

- “(6) That if the increased rates were permitted Birmingham—by reason of its central position—would be placed at a disadvantage in its trade with every coast-town of this kingdom, in competition with foreign-made goods arriving under cheap sea rates, while the very large export trade done by this city would suffer enormously in the competition abroad—many manufacturers would be compelled to migrate to the sea-coast, and, “in some cases, be tempted even to cross the sea.””

Copies of this communication were forwarded to the Secretaries of the Railway Companies, members of Parliament for the counties of Warwick, Worcester, and Stafford, the local and the London Press, Chambers of Commerce throughout the country, and all the important manufacturers in the city and district. Applications were subsequently received from upwards of sixty correspondents for copies of the objections of the Chamber for the use of County Councils, Dock and Harbour Boards, Town Councils, Railway and Canal Traders' Associations, and other bodies. A circular was then addressed to the members of the Chamber, stating that the further prosecution of the objections of the Chamber to the proposed increase of rates would involve expenditure in excess of the ordinary funds of the Chamber, and generous donations were immediately forthcoming. This support made it possible for the Council of the Chamber to appoint a Committee to take such action as they deemed expedient to support the objections by evidence before the Board of Trade. A little later a letter was received from the Board of Trade suggesting that the Chamber should place itself in communication with the Great Western, the London and North Western, and the Midland Railway Companies, with a view to arranging, where practicable, the differences arising upon the classification—reserving for future consideration by the Board of Trade itself those differences

which related to the proposed schedule of maximum rates and the general conditions. It is evident that the Railway Companies, even then, had arranged between themselves so satisfactory an understanding (an understanding which was not at all satisfactory to the trader) that direct negotiation was impossible, for the Council of the Chamber unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that in their opinion no useful purpose would be served by approaching the Companies until after the Board of Trade had dealt with all questions of principle that were in dispute. Shortly afterwards a communication was received from the Board of Trade as to the hearing of objections to the Railway Companies' proposals, in which it was stated that the Board would be prepared, if necessary, to hear evidence from individuals. Upon receipt of this advice a circular was addressed to the members of the Chamber inviting information as to those who were prepared to give evidence. Thus, in this year, the Chamber did everything which was humanly possible (having regard to its ordinary income and the financial support it received from a limited number of members) to contest the excessive and objectionable proposals of the Railway Companies, and it was therefore entitled to a fair measure of the success that attended its efforts.

About this time there seemed to be considerable activity in regard to improved water communication for the transport of goods. A letter was received from the Town Clerk of Worcester intimating that steps were being taken to improve the Severn waterway, to enable steamers of about 450 tons to reach the City of Worcester from the seaboard, and the Council promised it their moral support. A deputation was subsequently received consisting of the Mayor of Worcester (Alderman Smith Carrington) and Alderman Willis, and the aims and objects of the proposed scheme were fully explained, but obviously the Council of the Chamber could make no contribution to a guarantee fund which had for its object the development of only a very small proportion of the canal system of the country.

In their annual report the Council stated that the year had witnessed no important changes in the tariffs

Canal Development.

Foreign Tariffs.

of foreign nations, but that the time was rapidly approaching when great changes might be expected. The Treaties of 1881 and those of subsequent years supplementary thereto were terminable in 1892, and European Powers were beginning to consider the commercial engagements subsisting between them and foreign States. It was felt by the Council that the whole subject would require the most careful supervision of the British Government in order that the interests of our manufacturing districts might receive adequate attention.

Imperial
Federation
League.

A letter was received from the Imperial Federation League enclosing a copy of a report of the Commercial Committee of the League upon subjects for consideration at a subsequent conference of representatives of the "Self-Governing Communities of the Empire." The report dealt with a number of subjects of Imperial concern, but the Council of the Chamber unanimously passed the following resolution :—

"That whilst the Council approve of the objects of the Imperial Federation League, as set forth in their circular of November 13th last, they are of opinion that the primary essential condition of Imperial Federation is a Customs Union of the Empire."

State of
Trade.

The Council of the Chamber reported that they might fairly congratulate the traders of the Midlands upon a "very considerable and profitable" improvement in the state of trade during 1889, as compared with recent years, in the staple industries of the city and district generally, and more especially in the important interests of iron and other metals. The great foreign copper syndicate, which for more than a year had by its action paralysed the metal trades, came to "an ignominious end" in March, 1889, and "to the surprise of all," so far from its collapse being followed by the disasters which were predicted, manufacturers were enabled successfully to deal with the currency of lower prices, and to close the year with prosperity and success. These results, the Council thought, were mainly attributable to the financial strength of those interested and to the soundness of the large and legitimate demand for the metal. The iron and coal trades had also, during the year, been both profitable and sound,

and although labour and fuel had been necessarily dearer the twelve months closed with very satisfactory results, "except in so far as the dearness of money was then beginning to exercise its usual adverse influence."

CHAPTER LXI.

1890.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce held in London on the 25th, 26th, and 27th March, 1890, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. Henry W. Elliott, W. W. Lord, J. W. Tonks, Fredk. Blood, W. N. Whitehead, W. H. Brothers, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary). Association of Chambers of Commerce

Mr. W. H. Brothers, on behalf of the Chamber, moved the following resolution :— Weights and Measures Act.

"That this Association having duly considered the provisions of the new Weights and Measures Act (1889) hereby resolves to use its influence—with County Councils and other local bodies having authority in such matters—in favour of the adoption of uniformity of procedure of weighing instruments, weights, and measures.

"That this Association intimate to the Board of Trade its anxious hope that the powers vested in that Department under the new Statute may be exerted to ensure the desired uniformity."

In moving the resolution, Mr. Brothers said that the Act contained very important provisions, but did not provide any guarantees for its different provisions to be carried out in a uniform manner. One of the most useful provisions made was the removal of the anomalies which existed in regard to the compulsory stamping of all scales, weights, and measures. Since the time of the Norman Conqueror it had been necessary to have weights stamped, but not scales and balances, and it was to be

Commercial
Legislation.

feared that the absence of a central department controlling the application of the Act would be found to be a great defect owing to the lack of uniformity in their interpretation and administration of the Act by the various local authorities.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

In their annual report the Council stated that the session of 1890 had been productive of fifteen Acts of Parliament dealing with commercial subjects, which included an Act consolidating the Law of Partnership; an amendment of the Bankruptcy Law, containing provisions for the carrying out of compositions and rendering schemes of arrangement less expensive; an Act transferring the winding-up of certain Companies from the Court of Chancery to the Bankruptcy Court and simplifying the mode of procedure; and an Act defining and extending the responsibility of directors and promoters of Companies for statements contained in prospectuses issued for launching Companies under the Joint Stock Companies' Acts. The Chamber, during the session, presented petitions in favour of the Foreign Goods (Marks of Origin) Bill; the Merchandise Marks Act (1887) Amendment Bill; the Directors' Liability Bill (an extension of the provisions of which was advocated); the Rating of Machinery Bill; the Canal Development Bill; the Registration of Firms Bill; the Factory and Workshop Act (1878) Amendment Bill; the Steam Engines Bill; the Companies' (Memorandum of Association) Bill; the Tribunals of Commerce Bill; the Trading Registration Bill; the Companies (Winding-up) Bill; the Salaried Shop Assistants' Weekly Half-Holiday Bill; and the Employers' Liability for Injuries to Workmen Bill, subject to certain amendments which were deemed to be desirable.

Mines (Eight
Hours) Bill.

Petitions were also presented against certain Bills, the most important of which was one to restrict labour in mines to eight hours per day, which the Council contended was contrary to the principles of individual liberty.

Railway
Rates.

The year 1890 was a very important one for traders deeply concerned in the question of railway rates, and the Chamber was very active on the matter. Proceedings under

the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1888) received the very careful attention of the Council. The enquiry directed by the Board of Trade in compliance with the provisions of Section 24 of the Statute referred to, respecting the proposed new classification of merchandise traffic, and the maximum rates of the various Railway Companies, was conducted in public between October 29th, 1889, and May 21st, 1890, and 4,000 objections were deposited by 1,500 objectors. This inquiry was presided over by Lord Balfour of Burleigh (then Parliamentary Secretary of the Board of Trade) and Mr. Courtenay Boyle, C.B. (Assistant Secretary, Railway Department of the Board). They sat for 73 days in London, 8 days in Edinburgh, and 4 days in Dublin—taking evidence from 211 witnesses, of whom 178 represented the traders. Both the Railway Companies and the traders were represented by eminent Counsel, and the Commissioners appointed to hold the inquiry reported that they had reason to believe that their inquiry had been thoroughly exhaustive, and that the information laid before them had been sufficient to enable them to come to a decision upon the intricate and important questions involved, which the Council thought would “properly protect the interests of the Railway Companies on the one hand and those of the traders on the other.” The Council of the Chamber suggested that full credit should be given to the Board of Trade for the care and attention they had bestowed upon the preparation of the schedules, and for the improvements which they had made with reference to classification and other matters, and hailed with some satisfaction the report of the Commission, which (*inter alia*) commended the action of the Board under the powers so recently confirmed. Unfortunately, however, the principles advocated by the Chamber and by the Board of Trade Commissioners were not fully acted upon in framing the proposed maximum rates and charges, and although the position of traders was, on the whole, improved by the report to the Board of Trade, it was still considered to be very far from satisfactory—notably as regarded station terminals and the proposed high rates of carriage of many “staple articles and small parcels.”

Immediately upon the issue of the report of Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Courtenay Boyle the Council appointed a Committee to consider how far the objections of the Chamber to the classification of merchandise and the schedule of maximum rates and charges had been met, and this Committee, after holding several meetings, reported that the suggestions of the Chamber had been adopted by the Board of Trade almost in their entirety in regard to train loads and truck loads; in the dissection of service terminals under the heading of loading, unloading, covering, and uncovering; and also in regard to siding accommodation, demurrage, and the general exemption clause. The position of freighters, it was stated, had been materially improved by the Board's report, as compared with the suggestions of the Companies on the following points:—Improved classification; insertion of hardware in Class 3; the insertion of unclassified articles in Class 3; the reduction of the proposed maximum station terminals; reasonable facilities for the conveyance of perishable goods at such maximum rates as the Board considered to be fair; modified proposals relative to rates to be charged on fractions in weight; a considerable reduction upon the proposed maximum rates for the conveyance of goods and minerals; the reduction of the limit for "smalls" from 560 to 336lbs.; and the fixing of maximum rates for the carriage of the goods referred to. The matter had, however, still to come before Parliament for approval in detail, and the Council stated that they would continue to give watchful attention to the matter, although their action was "sorely crippled by want of the necessary funds for effectively dealing with it."

Foreign
Treaties and
Tariffs.

The Council reported that during the year 1890 Her Majesty's Government appointed a Committee to consider the course of action to be adopted with reference to the termination of the Treaties with France and other countries in 1892. Having regard to the numerous and important industries carried on in the city and district, the Council, at their July meeting, decided to memorialise the President of the Board of Trade, asking that a Committee especially qualified to advise upon such industries

might be brought into connection with the members of the Government in negotiating new Treaties. This request was made and refused on the ground that a Committee had already been appointed, but the representations of the Chamber were invited.

It was reported that considerable progress had been made with regard to the preliminary arrangements for the revision of the French Tariff. The French Government had addressed enquiries to the Chambers of Commerce and Trade Associations throughout France for the purpose of obtaining their views on points connected with commercial treaties and the revision of the then existing tariff arrangements with other countries. A considerable majority of the French Chambers advocated the denunciation of all treaties that were terminable, and expressed the hope that no new Tariff Treaties would be promulgated. They also evinced a distinct and "pretty general" leaning towards increased protection. In November the Chamber received, through the Government Treaties Committee, copies of the new French Customs Tariff Bill then before the Chamber of Deputies, with a request that a full and confidential report might be furnished on its probable effects on the particular trades of the district. The Tariff Committee of the Chamber gave the subject their immediate attention; obtained a translation of the document, so far as it affected local industries; and printed and circulated the same amongst the members of the Chamber, with a circular asking for information as to its probable effect on their respective trades. The replies thus obtained were subsequently embodied in a report containing the views of the Tariff Committee, and the recommendations of the Committee were adopted by the Council and forwarded to the Board of Trade on the 17th December. In an "*Exposé des Motifs*," the French Government had stated that it was proposed to renounce the system of treaties, to regain their liberty, and to be always in a position to modify their tariffs according to circumstances. A general autonomous tariff, it was said, would be calculated in such a manner as to assure the national labour (*i.e.*, of France) the minimum of protection recognised as indispensable; and it was proposed that

French
Tariff.

the tariff—which could always be modified by the French Parliament—should be the ordinary one, applicable only to nations in regard to which they might not have particular reasons for applying higher duties. These reasons, the French Government stated, might be :—(1) That a nation did not accord to them the same advantage which it accorded to others ; or (2) That whilst not applying differential treatment to France, a nation struck at her productions by import duties obviously excessive and out of all proportion to those that the French Tariff applied to imports from such nation ; and in regard to both of these it was announced that all, or part, of the duties under the general tariff would be capable of being raised up to a fixed minimum. Commenting upon this “ *Exposé des Motifs*,” the Council said :—

“ A double tariff is therefore proposed—the maximum tariff generally applicable to countries not granting commercial advantages to France, and the minimum tariff exclusively reserved for countries offering favourable treatment, liable, however, to increase without notice in the event of any real or imaginary grievance.”

United

States Tariff. It was stated, however, that in all probability the minimum tariff could be conceded to England, but, as even this showed a considerable increase in the duties then paid, the result would necessarily be detrimental to British trade with France.

For many year trade with the United States had been difficult owing to the protective tariff in operation there. In October, 1890, the McKinley Tariff came into force, and the Council reported that by very considerably increasing the duties on British goods it made trade with the United States still more difficult than formerly. They forwarded a resolution to H.M. Foreign Secretary, which was passed unanimously, and in which it was stated that, in view of the successive limitations of our export trade caused by “ hostile foreign tariffs ” and the “ need for developing fresh markets,” the British Government was urged to maintain the sphere of British influence in Africa. Clearly the Council was then firmly of opinion that owing to the policy of foreign countries, which tended gradually

to reduce the value of the British export trade, it was desirable for the Government to preserve the chief neutral markets. They went even further, for, at the same time as the decision previously referred to was arrived at, they passed the following resolution, also unanimously :—

“That in the opinion of the Council no treaties of Colonial Commerce should in future be concluded unless a Preference.
clause be inserted therein to the effect that the preferential treatment of its Colonies by any foreign power shall not be considered action of a nature to justify any claim by the other contributing party or parties under the most favoured nation clause.”

The Council reported that they had for many years Postal Reform
advocated a reduction in the postal charges on letters addressed to our Colonies and Possessions abroad, and that they were pleased to be able to state that on the 1st January, 1891, the fivepenny and sixpenny rates previously charged on letters to India and to the Australian and other Colonies were reduced to twopence-halfpenny. They were not entirely satisfied with this, however, for they addressed a memorial to the Lords of the Treasury urging the Government to extend the penny postage system to include the conveyance of letters between Great Britain and her Colonies, British India, and the United States of America.

During 1890 the Council convened a Special General Meeting of members to consider the Rating of Machinery Rating of Machinery.
Bill, which proposed to restrict the rate on machinery to that which is attached to the freehold of any building. The Bill was unanimously approved, and a petition on matter addressed to the House of Commons

A memorial was presented to the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, stating that the income tax Income Tax
levied on goods consigned to that country by persons resident out of India was unfair in its incidence, as the British consignors were also required to pay income tax in England on profits wherever made.

In the memorial it was urged that such tax should be withdrawn in conformity with the similar decision arrived at by the Government as far back as 1863. The

Government of India replied that they entertained no doubt the tax might legally be levied; that it did not appear to be inequitable; that the Indian trader who purchased articles made in India for re-sale to the public, as well as the Indian trader who purchased articles abroad for sale in India alike, paid tax on the profits of their transactions; and that there was, therefore, no good reason why the foreign trader who consigned goods to India for sale should not in his turn contribute to the revenues of the State which offered him a market for his goods and provided for their safety.

Birmingham
and Liver-
pool Ship
Canal.

A special meeting of the Chamber was held on the 24th September, 1890, to consider the Birmingham and Liverpool Ship Canal Scheme. The assembly was addressed by several gentlemen in explanation of the project, and it was unanimously resolved:—

“That this meeting have heard a description of the Birmingham and Liverpool Ship Canal Scheme, its objects and advantages, express its approval of it, and considers it deserving of support.”

From the general tenour of the resolution it would seem to be clear that the Chamber was not deeply impressed with the possibility of accomplishing such an ambitious and costly scheme, but the passing of the resolution shows conclusively that the burden of transport was still pressing very heavily on the district, and that something was needed to bring about an improvement.

Silver
Question.

The Chamber had in times past made the “silver question” their own, and had urged their views in season and out of season. As we have shown the amount of support they received was comparatively small, and for several years prior to 1890 they had been almost silent on the question. In 1890, however, in a petition to the House of Commons, they recurred to the subject, stating that the exporters of British and Irish manufactures had year by year to rely more fully upon silver-using countries as outlets for their productions; that the absence of a par of exchange frequently caused losses to those engaged in such trade, and at all times greatly increased the difficulties under which the commerce was conducted; and that they therefore urged that a Conference

of the chief commercial nations should be called to consider whether a fixed ratio could be established between gold and silver monies by international agreement.

In their annual report the Council stated that they believed that the year 1890 opened with fair prospects for the Midland trades, although in some departments the success of trades' unions in obtaining large advances in the general rate of wages, caused the effects of foreign competition to be severely felt in neutral markets. The result, it was stated, was soon evident in restricted output and reduced employment in some important local trades, so that in many cases the workpeople were not substantially benefited by the advances in wages they received. The enhanced price of silver consequent upon United States legislation proved a great advantage in Indian exchanges and in dealings with silver-using countries; but the uncertainty as to the continuance of this state of things, limited by the ability of a single nation permanently to affect the relations of silver throughout the world, deprived the United States measure referred to of a portion of its efficacy as a "factor in improving trade." The unsettled state of South America, the revolution in Brazil, and the difficulties of the Argentine Republic, early began to have their effect by restricting an important portion of our foreign trade; and the fact that the engagements of Messrs. Baring Brothers were met by prompt action on the part of the Bank of England, which the Government were prepared, if necessary, to support, saved the country from a panic of the first magnitude. Commenting upon this crisis, the Council said that the trouble served to bring out in strong relief the solid foundations of British credit, but in their opinion the very extent of the danger, which had been averted, gave—when openly recognised—a serious shock for a time to the industries of the city and district.

State of
Trade.

In this year the Council were evidently becoming seriously alarmed at the serious restriction caused to British trade by high foreign tariffs. They reported that the passage of the McKinley Tariff in the United States—including, as it did, duties which were almost prohibitory on many Midland manufacturers—had been a disturbing element, and that, although its immediate

effects had been an unwelcome surprise to the citizens of the States themselves and a motion for its repeal was already before Congress, it had undoubtedly prevented the placing of orders in Birmingham which had usually found their way here. Continuing, the Council said that the growing importance of our trade with the Colonies and Dependencies, and the need for opening new markets—not adversely affected by tariffs—had been prominently brought before the traders of the district during the year, and that the movements in Canada (*i.e.*, with regard to a British Preferential Tariff) had been watched with much concern by all those who saw the importance of cultivating improved trade relations with Greater Britain.

Commenting upon the Board of Trade report on the schedules of classification rates and charges of the Railway Companies, the Council said that although they promised some improvement in respect to the demands of the Companies themselves, the high dividends earned by the Railways had only been the measure of the extra burden imposed. They therefore urged that steady efforts to improve the report would be necessary if the Midland traders were to have a fair chance of progressing and expanding in the future.

CHAPTER LXII.

1891.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. Wm. Tonks, W. W. Lord, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary).

Decimal
System.

On behalf of the Chamber Mr. W. W. Lord moved (his speech being read by the Secretary of the Chamber) that the Executive Council of the Association be requested to take such steps as they might think necessary to facilitate the introduction into this country of the decimal system of coinage, weights, and measures. Mr. Lord's

inability to speak was due to indisposition, but his views were very effectively stated in the remarks read by Mr. Haydon. He suggested that, in so far as coinage was concerned, there should be 1,000 farthings to the £ instead of 960, and that the following table should be adopted :—

Unit	Farthing altered to	1,000 expressed in a/cs	.001
2½ units	Halfpenny	400	.04
5 "	Penny	200	.02
10 "	Ten units	100	.01
35 "	Fivepenny		
	remaining	40	.25
50 "	One Shilling	20	.5
100 "	Florin	10	1.0
125 "	Half-a-Crown	8	1.25
200 "	Four Shillings	5	2.00
250 "	Five Shillings	4	2.50
500 "	Half-Sovereign	2	5.00
1,000 "	Pound Sterling	1	10.00

After some discussion the resolution was carried *nem com.*

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held in Dublin on the 1st and 2nd September, 1891, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. Wm. Tonks, Wm. Barwell, R. P. Yates, H. W. Elliott, and W. F. Haydon (Secretary), but they moved no resolution. Autumnal Meeting of Association.

The Council reported that the Parliamentary Session of 1891 was productive of "little mercantile legislation of a practical character." An Act was passed to amend the Merchandise Marks Act (1887), which, it was thought, would prove a useful measure; the Stamp Act—which consolidated a number of statutes relating to Stamp Duties—was a consolidating measure; and the Factory and Workshops Act was amended by a Government measure so as to improve the condition of women and children in many small trades, and this it was hoped would check some of the evils of the sweating system. The Chamber petitioned against the Shops (Weekly Half-Holiday) Bill; in favour of the Rating of Machinery Bills; in favour of the False Marking Prevention Bill; in favour of the Steam Engines and Boilers Bill; in favour of the Pig Iron Warrants Bill; in favour of the Companies' Act (1862) Amendment Bill; in favour of the Registration of Firms Bill; against the Factory and Workshops' Act (1878) Commercial Legislation.

Amendment Bill (which, it was considered, would unnecessarily and mischievously hamper trade by placing too stringent restrictions on the management of factories and workshops); against the Factory and Workshop Act (1878) Amendment (No. 2) Bill; in favour of the Factories and Workshops Bill, subject to slight amendment; in favour of the Canal Development Bill; in favour of the Shop Hours Bill; in favour of the Boilers Registration Bill; in favour of the Corn Sales Bill, making the sale of corn by weight compulsory; in favour of the Trading Registration Bill; in favour of the Public Trustee Bill; and in favour of the False Marking Prevention (No. 2) Bill, which was designed to check the false marking of worthless goods by the use of "blind or fictitious names."

Railway
Rates and
Charges.

The Council reported that Provisional Order Acts of nine of the great Railway Companies, dealing with the subject of the maximum rates for the conveyance of merchandise and the classification of goods, had been passed into law; that these represented the result of a protracted inquiry; and that the Council hoped they might prove a satisfactory compromise between traders and the Railway Companies. These Acts included the codification of the numerous statutes governing the powers of the larger lines; the fixing of maximum charges; the provision of a statutory classification; and other matters. Their operation was deferred for nearly a year to enable the Railway Companies to ascertain the relation of their then existing charges to the new maxima. It was stated, however, that many important railway matters were still left undetermined; besides which the revised classification of schedules of rates and charges in respect of upwards of two hundred railways and all the canals of the United Kingdom had yet to be settled by Parliament.

French
Tariff.

The Council reported that the new French Tariff which they had referred to in the previous year had been passed by the Chamber of Deputies, and that it made comparatively few and unimportant alterations in the proposed duties on goods made in this district as compared with the original proposals. There was, however, one important exception, viz.:—"Velocipedes," the duty

on which it was proposed to raise from the former rate of 120 francs per 100 kilos to 220 francs (minimum tariff) and 250 francs (general tariff). A memorial was addressed to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (The Marquis of Salisbury) calling his attention to certain facts, and urging the desirability of prompt steps being taken to bring influence to bear in the proper quarter to prevent, if possible, the adoption and ratification of the proposed increased rates of duty on the articles referred to. The facts mentioned were that in their first proposals the French Government continued velocipedes at the rate of 120 francs, the Chamber of Deputies having raised the amount; that if the increased duty were confirmed by the Senate it would do the bicycle industry of this country great "wrong and injury," either compelling a corresponding reduction in price or causing the transfer of a considerable portion of the industry from this country to French soil; that such an event would be felt severely in Birmingham, Coventry, and other Midland towns where many thousands of people were engaged in the manufacture of bicycles, and would, moreover, be likely to cause a feeling of bitter resentment; and that, as England was so pre-eminently the producer and exporter of bicycles, it was a matter of indifference to other countries what rate of duties the French adopted. The agent in Paris of the Quadrant Cycle Co. subsequently called upon the Ministry of Commerce, when he was informed that the British Government had made no observation whatever on the new tariff, and it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the increased duty became law, and the French market became seriously restricted in regard to the sale of English-made bicycles.

It was reported by the Council that a new Spanish ^{Spanish} Tariff would come into operation during 1892, under ^{Tariff.} which the import duties on many goods of local manufacture would be materially increased. They added that at the time of reporting the matter had not received the consideration of the Tariff Committee, and from the abortive result of their labours in reference to the French Tariff, they were somewhat doubtful as to whether any useful purpose would be served by putting local manu-

facturers and merchants to the trouble and inconvenience of assisting in the preparation of a report upon the question.

During the year 1891 a Treaty was concluded between Spain and the United States of America, under which American goods would obtain a considerable advantage in regard to duty on entry into Cuba and Porto Rico. At the suggestion of Mr. C. M. Kennedy, of the Foreign Office, a deputation acting with a similar body appointed by the Sheffield Chamber, met Sir Clare Ford, Her Majesty's Ambassador at Madrid, and placed before him facts and figures in reference to local manufactures shipped to the West Indies. The deputation also urged that steps be taken to procure for England most favoured nation treatment; and Sir Clare Ford informed them that he sympathised with the objects they had in view, and that the English Government was not likely to pass the matter over in silence.

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

The Chamber received an invitation to submit resolutions to be placed on the agenda for the second Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, to be held in London in June, 1892. The following resolution was forwarded:—

“That this Congress is of opinion that every effort should be made by Her Majesty's Government to promote closer commercial relations between the United Kingdom and her Colonies and Dependencies, and to this end desires the abrogation of the European Treaty Clauses, which at present hinder the same.”

State of
Trade.

Reporting on the state of trade for the year the Council said it was probable that there had been an increase in the Home trade, but that the contraction in the Foreign trade, especially during the latter half of the year, and the stationary demands of the Colonies, had prevented this expansion being felt as it would otherwise have been. There was a reduction in exports to the extent of £12,000,000, and when the question of profits was considered the Council considered the result was not encouraging. The general level of prices was fully 4 per cent. lower at the end of 1891 than at the beginning,

and although raw materials for manufacture fell in the same ratio the difficulty of reducing working expenses, and the fact that the cost of labour tended rather to increase than diminish, meant a distinct "lack of profit." In all industries where Trade Unions were powerful, even the most moderate reduction in wages was fiercely contested, with the result that much business was lost in the latter part of the year which could not be done at a profit. "While, therefore," the Council continued, "with low prices of commodities the year has been one of moderate prosperity for the working classes, the probable closing of many markets for a time or permanently by the combined action of tariffs and strikes may lead to much depression and loss of work." The Council went on to say that the fluctuations in the price of silver had had a very disturbing effect on our trade with India and the Far East; that our Australian Colonies had been buying too freely with money lent by England, and were thus going through a financial strain which must limit their trading power for a time; and that the McKinley Tariff in the United States had unfavourably affected exports to that market. The war of tariffs on the Continent, which was being carried on so fiercely had already caused injury to Midland trades, and although England might have the most favoured nation treatment, the new rates of duty, it was felt, must disorganise if they did not permanently injure the trade from Birmingham and district. Concluding, the Council said these conditions did not present a very hopeful prospect for the business of the following year; but they were of opinion that it was wise to look facts in the face, and while offering a word of warning to those who might be too hopeful of expanding trade, they believed that, with timely caution, the energy and enterprise of the manufacturers and merchants of the Midlands would be equal to the needs of the year.

CHAPTER LXIII.

1892.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. J. W. Tonks was the sole representative of the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 8th, 9th, and 10th March, 1892, but at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Newport (Mon.) in September, the delegates were Mr. R. P. Yates, Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. J. W. Tonks, and Mr. Fredk. Blood.

Minister of
Commerce.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association Mr. J. W. Tonks moved, on behalf of the Chamber :—

“That this Association must again express its regret that no step has yet been taken for the creation of a Minister of Commerce. In view of the activity of foreign nations in a war of tariffs inimical to British interests, it urges upon the Executive Council to represent to the Government the necessity of giving effect to the creation of a high Government Department to represent trade and industry in the Cabinet, such as was twice sanctioned by vote of the House of Commons. It also desires to impress upon commercial representatives now in Parliament the importance of insisting upon action in this direction.”

Considerable discussion ensued, and ultimately the resolution was withdrawn on the suggestion of the President, on the ground that on two occasions and under two different administrations the subject had been before the House of Commons, and nothing had come of it—the feeling of the House being not in favour of making the change—and that the passing of resolutions with no chance of any good resulting only tended to weaken the influence of the Association. Whilst not criticising the action of the President, it might here be pointed out that an Association of any kind would be useless if it only passed resolutions on matters upon which a majority of the House of Commons was agreed. The principle object of the Association of Chambers of Commerce is, or

should be, to persuade, or induce, Parliament to accept its views on commercial matters, and in case of failure to try again, and, in common parlance, "to peg away until it attains success."

At the Autumnal Meeting the delegates of the Chamber moved :—

Assignment
of Book
Debts.

"That the practice of mortgaging book debts to cover cash advances constitutes a serious danger to legitimate trading, and that, in the opinion of this meeting, all assignments of book debts should be registered after the manner of Bills of Sale."

After debate the motion was rejected.

The second Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire was held at the Hall of the Merchant Taylor's Company, Threadneedle Street, London, on June 28th, 29th, and 30th, and July 1st, when the Chamber was represented by Mr. R. P. Yates, Mr. William Priest, and Mr. J. W. Tonks.

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

The resolution proposed by the Chamber at this Congress, urging that every effort should be made by the Government to promote closer commercial relations between the United Kingdom and her Colonies and Dependencies, and that to this end European Treaty Clauses which hindered the same should be abrogated, was carried unanimously. It is significant that of the four days on which the Congress sat two were occupied in the consideration of the desirability of creating some more definite business connection between the various parts of the Empire than then existed.

Inter-
Imperial
Trade.

The Council reported that with the exception of an Act to amend the law relating to the Employment of Young Persons in Shops, the year 1892 was unproductive of legislation of a practical commercial character. Quite an average number of legislative proposals introduced into the Commons were, however, examined, and representations with respect thereto made to the House of Commons by petition. Most of these proposals have been referred to in the chapters relating to previous years, so that there is no necessity to deal with them in detail in this place.

Commercial
Legislation.

**Monetary
Reform.**

A memorial was presented to the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P., First Lord of the Treasury, calling his attention to the fact that in common with other Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture, the Birmingham Chamber had in previous years memorialised the Government in favour of monetary reform, and, in particular, had emphasised the necessity of the establishment of an International Monetary Union. In the present memorial the Chamber said they observed with satisfaction that Her Majesty's Government were alive to the gravity of the then present state of matters, and placed on record their approval of the policy initiated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for strengthening the National Metallic Reserve. Whilst feeling that they could confidently leave to the Government and its financial advisers how this policy could best be carried into effect, the Chamber expressed the opinion that the increase of the metallic reserve was only a part of a much wider question of Imperial and International Currency Reform, and that an effectual relief from the evils of the then present system, which had been so prominently exposed during a recent financial crisis in the City of London, could only be obtained by the restoration of silver to its former position as a standard monetary medium of exchange as proposed in Part 3, Section 30 to 36 of the final report of the Gold and Silver Commission (1888). In the opinion of the Council the operation of the existing currency and banking laws had, owing to the demonetisation of silver in Europe, been prejudicial to trade and agriculture and to the financial stability of the nation, and to remedy these evils it was contended that the currency should be restored to the position it occupied prior to 1873. The hope was expressed that the Government would endeavour to induce the States of the Latin Union to consent to re-open their Mints to the free coinage of silver, and see their way to join the Union when the former *status quo* should have been re-established, in order that the same might thereafter be maintained in conjunction with all other States which might agree to join an International Monetary Union, the want of which was becoming increasingly dangerous to the

financial stability of the Government of India, and was causing such severe and world-wide depression in trade and agriculture.

At another meeting of the Council the following resolution was unanimously passed :—

“That this Council is in favour of the increase of the Metallic Reserve at the Bank of England as the best means of maintaining the credit of the country in times of difficulty and panic. That the best means of increasing the stock of gold is by the issue of one-pound notes.”

In January, 1892, the Council considered the desirability of forming a Board of Conciliation for the settlement of local labour disputes, and appointed four of their members to confer with a similar number of the Birmingham Trades Council on the subject and to report. The Joint Committee thus formed held numerous meetings, and presented a report to the Council, which was finally adopted at a meeting on the 16th September, when Mr. R. P. Yates, Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. Wm. Barwell, Mr. J. J. Moffat, and Mr. William Priest were appointed to represent the Chamber on the Board.

Birmingham
and District
Conciliation
Board.

At a meeting of the Council, held on the 16th March, a memorial was adopted and ordered to be transmitted to the Foreign Secretary with regard to the question of Treaty arrangements between this country and Spain. In the previous year the terms of the Spanish-American Treaty had been considered, and a deputation had waited upon the British Ambassador to Madrid, but as his Excellency had been removed from that city the Council considered it advisable again to address the Foreign Secretary especially as the Spanish Government had avowed their intention not to accept the general principle of the most-favoured nation clause in the commercial treaties which might be substituted for those then in force. The Council, therefore, pointed out that it was imperative Great Britain should enjoy equal privileges with the United States of America in the markets of Cuba and Porto Rico, either by a renewal of the treaty on “most favoured nation lines” or some other treaty to that effect. Only a

Trade with
Spanish
West Indies.

formal acknowledgment was received from the Foreign Office, but the Board of Trade, to whom a similar memorial had been addressed, assured the Chamber that Her Majesty's representative at Madrid had been instructed to pay special attention to the points enumerated. As showing the seriousness of the position the Council published a list of a few of the principal articles of export to Cuba, together with particulars of the duties to be paid by United States and English manufacturers respectively, namely :—

			From Great Britain.	From United States.
Steel Rails	..	..	70%	Free.
Bar Iron	..	..	72%	„
Sheet Iron	..	..	78%	„
Cast-Iron Pots and Stoves			44%	„
Sad Irons	..	..	44%	„
Iron Chain	..	..	58%	„
Shovels ..	..	..	50 to 75%	„
Cast-Iron Pipes .	..	..	60%	„
Anchors .	..	..	60%	„
Nails (Iron)	..	..	65%	„
Ploughshares	..	..	40%	„
Galvanised-Iron Tubes			115%	57%
Tin Plates	..	..	61%	30%
Wrought-Iron Tubes	..		90%	45%
Lead Tubes and Sheets			38%	19%

Retention of
Uganda.

At their November meeting the Council transmitted to the Foreign Secretary a resolution to the effect that in view of the vast expenditure incurred by the country in the repression of the Slave Trade, and the depressed state of British trade, it was of imperative importance that Uganda should be retained under British influence. By invitation, Captain Lugard subsequently addressed a general meeting of the Chamber on the "Commercial Aspect of the Uganda Question," when a similar resolution was passed.

British Trade
in Africa.

Mr. A. J. M. Jephson, who accompanied Stanley's last African Expedition, delivered an address to a special meeting of the Chamber on March 2nd on "The Extension of British Trade in Central Africa." The meeting was well

attended, and at its close a resolution was passed authorising the officers of the Chamber to memorialise Her Majesty's Government in favour of their guaranteeing the payment of a moderate rate of interest for a limited number of years on a moderate capital, to be raised by an independent Company, for the construction of a line of railway from Mombasa on the East Coast of Africa to the Victoria Nyanza. This memorial was duly forwarded to the Foreign Secretary, and the House of Commons subsequently voted £20,000 for a survey of the proposed line of railway—a decision which was received with general satisfaction by the commercial community of the country. In the memorial it was pointed out that a very large trade might be opened up in the interior of British East Africa, provided the then existing cost of transport of goods to and from the interior of that country (which was declared to be excessive) could be materially reduced. It was believed that the construction of the suggested railway would be the means of reducing, to a very considerable extent, the cost of transport, and would thus act as an important factor in extending British trade, besides which it would also, in a great measure, stamp out the employment of slaves for the purposes of transport, and thus “put an end to slave-hunting and kidnapping in the interior for the purpose of furnishing carriers to and from the coast.”

In the same year the Council of the Chamber also urged Her Majesty's Government to consider the question of British Influence in West Africa, and to consider the expediency of despatching Commissioners to negotiate treaties with the African Potentates ruling the Hinterlands, or to obtain guarantees that their Dominions should not be placed under the exclusive protection of any but the British Imperial rule, or, as an alternative, to secure (presumably to annex) the Hinterlands. The Foreign Office gave no categorical reply to this memorial on the ground that it would be contrary to the public interest to do so.

South Africa, during this year, loomed pretty largely in the transactions of the Chamber, and yet another memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary, namely with regard to the development of Swaziland in the interests

of British trade. It was pointed out that by climate, soil, and situation, Swaziland was adapted for British settlers, and that a large and profitable trade might be secured if proper communication to the coast were established. A reply was received to the effect that the Government considered they were precluded by their engagements with the South African Republic from giving countenance and support to any scheme for a railway to pass through territory outside the boundaries of Zululand, but that if permission were desired for the construction of a line wholly in Zululand territory from Sordwana Bay to the Pongola River (subject to the risk of the Government of the South African Republic claiming to veto its further extension), the Government were prepared to refer such a proposal to the High Commissioner for South Africa and the Governor of Zululand, with the view of ascertaining whether there was any objection to the granting of permission to carry out such a project. At a later date a memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary stating that in the opinion of the Chamber the statement made at various times by Cabinet Ministers to the effect the Swaziland would not be handed over to the Boers was binding upon the honour of this country, and that the treaty rights then existing should be enforced for the protection of British interests and the maintenance of the independence of the Swazies. The Chamber also expressed the opinion that no question of the modification of the treaties in force should be entertained by this country until the franchise and equal civil rights with those enjoyed by the Dutch population of the South African Republic were conferred upon British subjects resident therein ; and that free trade in railways should be guaranteed in order that the resources of the country might be efficiently developed.

State of
Trade.

In their annual report the Council stated that the condition of trade during 1892 had been most unsatisfactory ; and that merchants, manufacturers and artisans had alike felt the curtailment of exports—"the two former by decreased profits ; the latter by lack of employment, and, in many trades, lower rates of wages." Strikes had been very general during the year, occasioned

in a great measure by foreign competition, necessitating purchases at lower prices than formerly ruled. This state of things compelled manufacturers to cut down wages to enable them to hold their markets, and the workmen resisted these reductions, "for the most, ineffectually"; trade being greatly depressed consequent upon hostile foreign tariffs. It was observed that the exorbitant duties levied on goods entering the markets of the United States would, in all probability, be modified as a result of the Presidential Election which had taken place, and that should that country revert to its former tariff a marked improvement in demand for British goods should result. Canada had made advances to the Mother Country for reciprocal preferential duties, and, in the opinion of the Council, this subject and the broader one of a commercial federation of the Empire for trading purposes, was deserving of the most careful consideration of all mercantile men. The continued imposition of hostile tariffs by foreign nations was detrimental to the best interests of British trade, and the Council urged that the matter should be closely watched by Her Majesty's Government with a view to steps being taken whenever opportunities arose, to ameliorate the unsatisfactory condition of our trading relations abroad. Added to all these difficulties, increased railway rates had restricted trade, and been generally prejudicial to business as a further burden upon declining trade. A feeling prevailed, however, that the Railway Companies would, to a great extent, revert to their previous rates (a change which was subsequently brought about by controlling legislation). Summing up their report the Council stated that the outlook in both the Home and Foreign trade was not encouraging, nor did there appear to be any immediate prospect of improvement in either branch.

CHAPTER LXIV.

1893.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association, held in London on the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd March, the Chamber was represented by Mr. R. P. Yates and Mr. J. Wm. Tonks, and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Plymouth on the 26th and 27th September, by Mr. R. P. Yates, Mr. R. N. Whitehead, and Mr. J. W. Tonks.

Inter-
Imperial
Trade.

The Chamber had given notice to move at the Annual Meeting of the Association a resolution calling attention to the offer of the Canadian Government, on terms of reciprocity, to give to the Mother Country a substantial reduction in the duties imposed on British manufactured goods, and urging the Government to give the offer their immediate and most serious consideration. This was, by leave, withdrawn, and a similar resolution was moved by the Middlesbrough Chamber. Neither of the Birmingham delegates took part in the discussion, which resulted in the previous question being carried by 53 votes to 20.

Assignment
of Book
Debts.

At the Autumnal Meeting, held in the previous year, a motion moved by the Chamber in favour of the Registration as Bills of Sale of all Assignments of Book Debts was rejected. Mr. J. W. Tonks moved the same resolution at the Annual Meeting, and in doing so called attention to the fact that the prevailing practice was detrimental to legitimate trading, and stated that the resolution was not sufficiently discussed at the Autumnal Meeting, and to that fact its rejection was probably due. On the present occasion a vote by Chambers resulted in the resolution being carried by 47 votes to 23.

Imperial
Federation.

At the Autumnal Meeting Mr. J. W. Tonks, on behalf of the Chamber, moved :—

“That the proposals of the Imperial Federation League are worthy of support, as they embrace suggestions of urgent importance to the manufacturing and mercantile community; and that this Association

considers it desirable that a conference of representatives of the United Kingdom and of the Self-Governing Colonies respectively should be summoned by the Imperial Government to consider the questions involved. . . . That this Association is of opinion that the time has now arrived when it is expedient that Her Majesty's Government should summon a second Colonial Conference on the lines of that held in 1887 for the consideration of questions of mutual interest to the Mother Country and the Colonies."

The proposals referred to embraced (1) the admission of Colonial Government securities to the category of investments in which, under British law, Trust Funds might be placed; (2) the Imperial guarantee of local loans raised for purposes subservient to Imperial ends, such as immigration, dry docks, strategic cables, railways, etc.; (3) the actual opening of the administrative services of the Empire, outside the United Kingdom, by holding local examinations for the Indian, Diplomatic, and Consular Services, as then done for the Army and Navy, and the more frequent appointment to Governorships and other high posts of fit persons in whatever part of the Empire they might be domiciled; (4) the selection from time to time of eminent Colonial Jurists to sit upon the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; (5) uniformity in certain branches of statute law, especially commercial law, as for instance, the Law of Bankruptcy and Merchant Shipping, increased facilities for the execution of legal processes, and so forth; (6) uniform Imperial postage and special arrangements for telegraphic service; (7) the fuller development of Inter-Imperial trade and the removal of existing hindrances. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Early in the year the Council of the Chamber addressed a memorial to the Foreign Secretary (the Earl of Rosebery), calling attention to the desirability of Her Majesty's Consuls abroad being empowered to collect and send home from time to time specimens of industrial products (other than of British manufacture), representing the requirements of the various markets within their jurisdiction; and the exhibition of such specimens on

Exhibition of
Commercial
Samples.

arrival in this country for the information and guidance of British manufacturers. The Secretary of the Chamber had been in communication with Her Majesty's Ambassadors at Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, St. Petersburg, and Lisbon, for the purpose of ascertaining if the Governments to which they were accredited instructed their Consuls to perform such services, and, as a result, he found that both the French and Belgian Governments did so, and that the Consuls of other Governments occasionally assisted their manufacturers in the same way. A reply was received that Her Majesty's Government had already taken steps for increased attention to be paid by Consuls to commercial matters, and that since 1886 Consuls in remote localities had sent home many samples of native manufactures. It is evident, however, that what the Chamber desired was a larger field of collection and a more systematic method, and also that the samples should not be confined to native products but extended to other foreign competitive articles. In regard to this Lord Rosebery replied that the collection and distribution of samples of foreign industries on an extended scale "would not only largely encroach upon other duties, in connection with shipping especially, which more particularly appertained to Consular Officers, but would also involve a heavy pecuniary charge on Public Funds, which might not be regarded with universal favour or considered justifiable." Continuing, Lord Rosebery said :—

"It would very probably be contended—and such a contention would be difficult to refute—that work of this nature should be undertaken rather by the Agents of parties interested than by Government Officials, on whom there has of late years been a growing tendency to impose duties which devolve more properly on individual energy and enterprise."

Owing to limitations of space it is impossible to go fully into all the paragraphs of Lord Rosebery's letter and the voluminous documents which accompanied it, but it is evident that official action was, even at that time, to a considerable extent restrained by the *laissez-faire* policy,

which now, fortunately for the trade of the country, has been almost entirely overthrown owing to the persistent pressure of the Chambers of Commerce.

On the 23rd January, 1893, a meeting of the members of the Chamber and of representatives of the manufacturing and mercantile community was held at the Masonic Hall, New Street, Birmingham, to consider a resolution passed by the Canadian Parliament to the effect that if and when the Parliament of the United Kingdom admitted Canadian products to the markets of the Mother Country upon more favourable terms than it accorded to the products of foreign countries, the Parliament of Canada would be prepared to accord corresponding advantages by a substantial reduction in the duties which it imposed upon British manufactured goods. The meeting was largely attended, and a motion was moved asserting that the future prosperity of British commerce must increasingly depend on commercial relations with the Colonies and

Inter-
Imperial
Trade.

“recognising the fact that Canada has by resolution of her Parliament invited the Mother Country to enter into an arrangement for reciprocally preferential duties, we hereby urge upon the Government the necessity of taking that invitation into their immediate and most serious consideration.”

Upon this having been seconded, the following amendment was moved :—

“That this meeting while fully recognising the importance of our commercial relations with our Colonies, declines to recommend the Government to consider a policy which, if carried out, would involve a departure from the principles of Free Trade.”

This amendment was carried by 76 votes to 61, and a resolution was then passed asking the Council to withdraw the resolution (referred to in the second paragraph of this chapter) which had been sent to the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

It should be stated that at that time the question was not one of party politics, and that the motion and the amendment were both supported by men of different shades of political opinion.

Commercial
Legislation.

The Council reported that the year 1893 had been almost a blank so far as commercial legislation was concerned, important political questions having diverted the attention of Parliament from commercial topics. Nevertheless, they gave close attention to all the proposals submitted to Parliament which were likely to affect commerce and industry, urging the adoption of those they believed to be beneficial, and opposing those considered to be detrimental. The importance of this work cannot be overestimated, not only on account of its intrinsic value but also because it is work which the individual trader never does for himself. If it had not been for the vigilance of Chambers of Commerce during the past century many Bills destructive of or injurious to the interests of trade would no doubt have found their way, as unopposed measures, on to the statute book, and many beneficial Acts would never have got there. In 1893 petitions were presented in favour of the Registration of Firms Bill (a hardy-annual) and the Foreign Goods (Marks of Origin) Bill, and against the Employers' Liability Bill. The latter was opposed on the same grounds as in the previous years, but the Council in their petition entered into somewhat greater detail. For instance, it was pointed out that the Bill would render an employer liable for injuries sustained by a workman through the negligence of a fellow-workman, over which negligence the employer had no control; that it contained no limit of time within which notice must be given or an action commenced, for compensation for injuries; and that the Bill would destroy all incentives for the establishment of a mutual insurance fund as between employer and employed. At a subsequent date, the Bill having passed through Standing Committee of the House of Commons, a petition was presented against certain clauses which were held to be especially injurious; and this being of no avail, a similar petition prepared by the Chamber was subsequently presented to the House of Lords by the Marquis of Salisbury. The Bill did not pass into law.

Naval
Defence.

A memorial was presented to the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P., the First Lord of the Treasury, stating that the Chamber had had under its consideration the

state of the naval defences of the country, and viewed with deep concern and anxiety the condition of the Navy. Continuing, they urged upon the Government the necessity of taking immediate steps to provide such additional means of defence as would afford the security demanded by our Empire and commerce. They stated further that they were convinced that in any financial scheme necessary in the public interest, Her Majesty's Government might be assured of the hearty support of the commercial community.

For many years the Council had strongly advocated the adoption by the country of a Decimal System of Coinage, Weights, and Measures. In the year 1891 they brought the subject before the Association of Chambers of Commerce, by whom action was taken. In their annual report the Council stated that the question had been repeatedly brought under the consideration of the Association, and deputations appointed by that body—the new Decimal Association, and others—had pressed the matter upon more than one Chancellor of the Exchequer. “These deputations,” the Council added, “had, for the most part, been favourably received as regards the theory, but no Government has yet been found prepared to face the practical difficulties the change would entail.” As will be seen later on, the Chamber subsequently, after most careful and anxious consideration, decided that if by the Decimal System the Metric System was meant, then it would be unwise to make it compulsory and to the absolute exclusion of the English System of Weights and Measures.

The Council's report on the state of trade for the year 1893 was again of a pessimistic character. Their previous pronouncement, a year before, that the outlook was not encouraging, was confirmed by the marked decrease of both imports and exports. Having regard to the continued increase in the population, the steady and alarming annual decrease in the volume of our trade (a good deal of which was, however, attributable to a decline in values) must, the Council observed, necessarily be most detrimental to the general welfare of the professional and commercial classes of the country. Many causes had combined to

produce the unsatisfactory state of things during 1893. The Strike in the Coal Trade was declared to be little short of a national disaster, there being daily indications of the mischievous effects, both direct and indirect, it produced on the industries of the country, independently of the great suffering caused thereby to artisans in various trades who were thrown out of employment, through lack of fuel to carry on production. Trade had also been materially checked by the financial breakdown in Australia and the United States, the revolution in the Brazils, the rate of exchange in Chili, and many of the South American Republics, and the continued fall in the value of silver. Our agricultural interests had been seriously affected by the depreciated value of wheat, both at home and abroad, whilst in many districts of the British Isles "an almost Australian drought" had placed the agriculturists in a very difficult position. Concluding their report the Council said that the serious outlook in connection with the unemployed should be faced by the legislature, as it would be both unwise and dangerous to the general community to permit the then existing discontent to grow without endeavouring to find a remedy. They therefore urged that "commercial matters should receive a much larger share of attention from our legislators."

CHAPTER LXV.

1894.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. R. P. Yates and Mr. Fred. Blood represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 13th, 14th, and 15th March, 1894; and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Huddersfield on the 11th and 12th September, the delegates were Mr. R. P. Yates, Mr. J. B. Chantrill, Mr. William Barker, and Mr. William Barwell.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association, Mr. R. P. Yates moved, on behalf of the Chamber :—

Immigration
of Pauper
Aliens.

“That in the opinion of this Association the immigration of pauper aliens into this country is most detrimental to the welfare of the British artisan for the following, among other reasons, viz. :—(a) that they are unskilled men and overcrowd an already overstocked labour market, congregating in large numbers in back houses of our large centres of industry, to the detriment of the sanitary condition of the district ; (b) that they evade the Factory and Workshop Acts by working an unlimited number of hours, thus greatly increasing the sweating system, which is so inimical to the interests of the artisan classes ; (c) that they increase the burden of the ratepayers by becoming in many instances chargeable to the Poor Law Unions ; and that the Executive Council be therefore requested to take such steps as they may deem expedient to urge the Government to legislate with a view to mitigate the evils of the existing system.”

The motion received a very large amount of influential support from speakers representing other Chambers, but ultimately, on the suggestion of the President, it was withdrawn on the understanding that it would again be moved at the Autumnal Meeting. At the latter meeting, however, it was rejected by the Association.

The Council reported that the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1894) represented a compromise between the Railway Companies and the representatives of trading interests as arranged through the intervention of the Board of Trade. The most important provision was that which authorised complaints against any increase in charges or rates made by a Railway Company since 1892, and empowered the Court to hold such increase unreasonable even though it might be within the maximum fixed by Act of Parliament.

Commercial
Legislation.

Petitions were presented to Parliament in favour of the Conciliation (Trade Disputes) Bill, the Rating of Machinery Bill, the Railway and Canal Traffic Bill, the Boards of Conciliation Bill ; and against the Limitations

of Actions Bill—the last-named being a Bill to provide for the limitation of time for actions of tort and for actions of contract.

Canal Tolls
and Charges.

The Canal Tolls and Charges (Birmingham Canal) Order Confirmation Act (1894) contained a classification of Merchandise and a Schedule of Maximum Tolls and Charges applicable thereto for the Birmingham Canal Navigators. The Provisional Order, confirmed by the Act was considered by a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, and Mr. D. W. Probert, who was a member of the Council of the Chamber and also President of the Birmingham and District Coal Merchants' and Consumers' Association, attended at the House of Commons to give evidence before that Committee on behalf of the Chamber of the Association, and of the City Authorities. In his subsequent report to the Council Mr. Probert said that the traders were unable to retain the "long weight of 2,400lbs. to the ton" as the Board of Trade so strongly urged the Committee to insert in the Act the *avoirdupois* standard ton of 2,240lbs. He added, however, that a compromise as to the maximum rates and tolls had been arrived at and incorporated in the Order, which would be beneficial to local trades.

Trade with
Spanish
Colonies.

The attention of the Council was called to the injury which had resulted from the Treaty between Spain and the United States of America by which, at and from the commencement of 1892, American goods were allowed to enter Cuba and Porto Rico on very advantageous conditions as compared with those to which British products were subjected. After giving the matter most careful consideration on the report of the Tariff Committee the Council presented a memorial to the Foreign Secretary (The Earl of Kimberley, K.G.). In this memorial they reminded the Foreign Secretary that on October 22nd, 1891, a deputation from the Chamber had an interview at the Foreign Office with Sir Clare Ford—then Her Majesty's Ambassador at Madrid—and placed before him facts and figures in reference to local manufactures shipped to the Spanish West Indies, and urged him to use his utmost endeavours to procure for this country most favoured nation treatment in any new

Treaty that might be concluded. The Council added that Sir Clare Ford at that interview declared himself in full sympathy with the objects of the deputation, and said they might rest assured that the English Government would not pass such a matter over in silence. On March 24th, 1892—Sir Clare Ford having in the interval left Madrid—the Council stated that they addressed a memorial to the then Foreign Secretary (the Marquis of Salisbury) pointing out that unless Great Britain could enjoy equal privileges with the United States of America in the markets of Cuba and Porto Rico, either by a renewal of the Treaty on most favoured nation lines or by some other Treaty to that effect, British trade with those markets would be seriously jeopardised. In consequence of the inaction of the Government, or their inability to induce Spain to comply with their wishes, Great Britain was not accorded equal privileges with the United States, and in their memorial of 1894 the Council were able to point to actual serious injury which had resulted—as they had previously prophesied—in consequence of the admission into Cuba and Porto Rico of a large number of goods of American manufacture of a class identical with those made here, which goods, if of English manufacture, were subjected to high rates of duty, whilst those of the United States would be duty free ; and of further goods upon which a low rate of duty was levied if imported from the United States, and a far higher duty if imported from this country. In the former class were iron hoops, bars, wire, chain, screws, roofing nails, railway spikes, washers, nuts, rivets, hinges ; cast-iron stoves and pipes ; iron and steel rails ; steel bars, plates, and wire ; sugar machinery ; steam engines and boilers ; hydraulic and gas engines, and steam and other pumps ; agricultural implements, portable forges, anchors, smiths' vices, hoes, adzes, plough paddles, matchets, shovels, sledge hammers, fry pans, files, rasps, light edge tools, carpenters' braces, engravers' tools, turnscraws, spoke shaves, hand saws, rules and wood-handle table cutlery. The latter class included wrought-iron tubes, galvanised iron sheets, and wire rope, tin bars, tin plate, tinned basins, hollow-ware ; brass and copper sheets, nails, tubes, wire and washers ;

India-rubber sheets, linen measuring tapes, fish hooks, paints, ink, caustic soda, linseed oil, wrapping paper, glass paper and emery cloth and saddlery goods. In consequence of this state of things the Council asserted that the trade of this district with Cuba and Porto Rico had been practically annihilated so far as regarded bar iron, iron hoops, galvanised and bright iron wire, iron railway spikes, iron washers and nuts, iron boiler rivets, iron screw bolts, cast-iron pipes over lin., iron and steel rails, shovels, hand saws, wrought-iron tubes, galvanised iron sheets and tiles, light tinned French basins, India-rubber sheets, borax, cast-iron stoves and iron sheets ; while the trade in all the other articles had been seriously interfered with. On the other hand a greatly-increased trade had sprung up between the United States and the markets referred to as a result of the Treaty. In view of all the circumstances the Council urged the Government to give attention to the serious aspect of the question to the trade of this district, with a view to including the Spanish Colonies in any Treaty of Commerce that might be included between Great Britain and Spain. The reply of the Foreign Secretary was to the effect that his Lordship was fully alive to the expediency of the course advocated by the Chamber ; that Her Majesty's Ambassador had received instructions to lay special stress on the desire of this country to obtain most favoured nation treatment in the Spanish Colonies ; but that "down to the present time the Spanish Government had not shown any inclination to accede to this desire." With regard to Cuba, however, some little advantage was gained by a dispute which arose owing to the United States imposing a duty on Cuban sugar. American goods were at once charged according to the first column of the tariff, which was the highest possible duty and considerably above the second column under which English goods were charged. The Americans, however, threatened reprisals by further taxing Cuban sugar, and, as a result, the Spanish Government agreed to conclude a *modus vivendi*, according to which American goods were taxed on the second column duties, and were thus at the commencement of 1895 on the same footing as English products. Seeing, however,

that the Preferential Treaty had subsisted for two years the United States had acquired control of the market—a control which, in subsequent years, they were able to strengthen by further arrangements with Cuba direct.

In February, 1894, the Council memorialised the Foreign Secretary (The Earl of Kimberley) with regard to a provision of the Roumanian Tariff, under which all goods imported into Roumania by water had to bear an extra impost called the “half per cent. tax,” from which goods imported by land were free. They pointed out that quite 97 per cent. of all British manufactures were sent to Roumania by sea, whilst those from Germany and Austria travelled by rail. From reliable information they had received the Council said that they were of opinion that, if proper representations were made to them, the Roumanian Government would be quite willing to make this tax applicable to all goods, whether imported by land or by sea, and that such a change would be most advantageous to this country. The Foreign Secretary replied that the tax had been imposed for many years to provide a fund for improving Roumanian harbours; that it was originally levied at a certain rate per cent. of the Customs’ duties, which were on an *ad valorem* basis, until the system of specific rates was introduced in the Customs’ tariff, when the incidence of the Customs’ duties became far heavier on certain articles than on others; that the tax for the improvement of the harbours, which continued to be levied at a percentage of those duties was found to press very hard on many articles of British produce; but that the intention had, however, always been that the Harbour Tax should be one-half per cent. on the value of the goods imported. In these circumstances the Foreign Office said a specific tariff for collecting the duties was prepared and was supposed to represent a rate of one-half per cent. on the value; but protests were made against it mainly because some of the rates were found to be far too high and because under it the tax would have been levied on all articles, whereas under the old system no articles were assessed to the Harbour Tax which were exempt from Customs’ duties. It was added, however, that in view of arriving at a tariff that should

Roumanian
Customs’
Tariff.

fairly represent one-half per cent. on the value of British produce imported into Roumania the Chamber should, with the least possible delay, prepare a list of the principal articles of export from this district into that country, together with a statement of their invoice values given wherever possible, according to their weight in kilogrammes or else by the yard. The desired information was almost immediately supplied, and the Foreign Office afterwards stated that the matter was being discussed with the Roumanian Government, and that, although there seemed to be little chance of inducing them to forego the tax, it might be possible to effect some improvement in its assessment.

Trade with
Siam.

In September, 1894, the Council had under consideration the unsettled state of British trade with Siam, and passed a resolution authorising a memorial to be sent to the Foreign Secretary with regard to its bearings upon British trade with this country. Previously, it was pointed out in the memorial, British commerce had predominated in Siam, the interest of other Powers being relatively insignificant. British trade with that country had been the steady growth of many years—its annual value then amounting to several millions sterling—and in the future, the Council thought, there was a reasonable prospect of increased trade between the two countries if Siam continued to be an independent State. In the opinion of the Chamber the then unsettled state of affairs might induce the French Government to take steps which would virtually amount to annexation of the country, including the greater portion of the Malay Peninsula and an extensive coast-line of the Sea of Bengal; and they therefore expressed the hope that Her Majesty's Government would take prompt and effective steps to prevent the injury to British interests in the East, "which would certainly and speedily follow should French control over Siam become an accomplished fact." The reply was to the effect that the Government was fully alive to the importance of the matter, which was receiving their careful attention.

Trade on
East African
Coast.

On the 19th February, 1894, a letter was addressed to the local members of Parliament stating that an

important part of the local trade to East Africa, which formerly came to this country, was being diverted to foreign ports, especially Hamburg and Marseilles—the cause assigned for the change being that the French and German Governments ran highly-subsidised lines of steamers direct to East Africa, while the British service was disconnected at Aden. It was further stated that on the Zanzibar Protectorate declaring Zanzibar a free port, to preserve the trade passing thence into German territory from the imposition of double duties, the German Government, with a view to secure the trade, imposed a duty of 10 per cent. on goods imported through Zanzibar, while on goods imported direct the duty was only $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the result being that orders for goods which should be placed in this country were going to the Continent. The great hope inspired by the acquisition of our East African territories was the opening of new markets where our trade would be unhampered by hostile tariffs which confronted it almost everywhere else, and yet, it was pointed out, notwithstanding official reports dealing with matters to be determined by the Government, they delayed in coming to a decision and declaring the policy and conditions under which British East Africa was to be effectively administered. In consequence progress “was paralysed and everything at a standstill in the country.” Neither administration had developed; it was asserted, could proceed under the then existing conditions, whereas effective administration would tend to remove the difficulties then experienced, establish British influence, and give such an impetus to trade as would attract British enterprise, both European and Indian. The local members of Parliament were, therefore, urged in the approaching session of Parliament to support any efforts that might be made to induce the Government to come to a definite decision, and proceed to the proper and effective administration of the important territories Great Britain had acquired in East and Central Africa.

The Council reported that in 1874, judging from published balance sheets and other particulars trade had been unsatisfactory. Continental competition in the iron trade continued to be very marked, and Belgian and

State of
Trade.

German iron were severely competing with British iron in India, Australia, the Levant, and many other neutral markets of the world. Unfortunately this unsatisfactory state of things, the Council observed, was not confined to iron alone, but extended to several of our other leading industries. British trade was seriously handicapped by the cheaper labour and longer hours which prevailed in Continental factories, and the low rates of carriage on Belgian canals and railways was very advantageous to the iron trade of that country. Prison-made goods, more especially those made by convict labour in Germany, placed free labour in Britain at a great disadvantage, seeing that convicts were employed by contractors, who paid on an average a wage of sixpence per day. The goods they produced had the run of our home markets, and were sold at such prices as made it impossible for British makers to compete. German manufacturers, it was pointed out, were protesting against this unfair mode of trading, and the evil was, therefore, being felt in Germany just as keenly as here. It was also asserted that unrestricted alien labour employed in London, Leeds, and other places, unfairly competed with our artisans, and that it was simply impossible for a British workman to keep his family upon such low wages as these aliens were willing to receive, and thus many of our own men were forced to emigrate or were driven into the workhouse. The low rate of money—2 per cent.—which had ruled during the year, showed the restriction of commerce, and the high price of consols, viz., 105, indicated the difficulty of employing capital. Added to these were the depressed condition of the Australian, Chilian, and South American markets, the “stagnated condition” of the United States, the continued depreciation in the value of all metals, and the low price of produce, all of which emphasized the unsatisfactory condition of commerce. The confederation of the Empire for trading and defensive purposes must, the Council felt, soon be considered, and if effected would, they thought, in a great measure correct the commercial depression which was so acute. Parliament was remiss, in that it had chiefly occupied itself with political questions, and had not given to commercial questions the attention

that was due to them. Concluding, the Council expressed the opinion that the appointment of a Minister of Commerce, unconnected with party politics, would tend to encourage trade, "as commercial questions would be considered by his department and British and Colonial enterprise carefully safeguarded." The most baneful effect on trade, they added, however, was caused by the ever-increasing fall in prices, and a more satisfactory state of business could not be anticipated until the purchasing powers of nations had returned to a normal state by a rise in the prices of both foreign and home produce.

CHAPTER LXVI.

1895.

Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. Wyley Lord, Mr. William Barwell, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary) represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 12th, 13th, and 14th March, 1895.

Mr. William Barwell moved, on behalf of the Chamber, that, upon the issue of special rules under the Factory and Workshops' Act (1891) by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Factories, which, in the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce of the district to which they apply, are inimical to the interests of the manufactures concerned, and, failing the revocation or amendment of such rules being obtainable under the provisions of the Act, united action of the Chambers in this Association is desirable in the general interests of manufacturing industries. The resolution was carried.

The Council petitioned in favour of the Boards of Conciliation Bill, the Rating of Machinery Bill, the Companies' Acts (Registration of Debentures) Bill, the Shops (Early Closing) Bill, the Joint Stock Companies' Register Bill, and the Trustee Act (1893) Amendment

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Rules under
Factory and
Workshop
Acts.

Commercial
Legislation.

Bill. The Shops (Early Closing) Bill subsequently passed into law. A petition was also presented advocating certain amendments of the Factory and Workshops' Bill, which was passed into law. General support was given to the provisions of the Bill; but it was pointed out that Clause 12 proposed that Sec. 82 of the principal Act, which provided penal compensation for persons injured by neglect to fence machinery, should extend to any death or bodily injury or injury to health, in consequence of the occupier of the factory or workshop having neglected to observe any provision of the Factory Acts or any special rule or requirement made in pursuance of the Act of 1891, and that this clause was far too wide in its application, and should not be passed into law without amendment, as it was unfair that employers of labour should be placed under the serious liabilities proposed.

Companies
Acts
Amendment.

Early in the year the Board of Trade appointed a Committee to enquire and report upon the complicated question of desirable amendments of the Acts of Parliament dealing with Joint Stock Companies. The Committee submitted a series of questions upon the working of the then existing Acts, and the Commercial Bills' Committee of the Chamber were instructed to report upon the same. Their report, which was adopted and transmitted to the Board of Trade, contained a fairly complete statement of the views that were then held. It was not thought desirable or necessary to postpone (a) until after subscription of the capital required, or (b) until a certain proportion, and, if so, what of the capital subscribed had been paid up in cash, the granting of corporate powers to a Company, *i.e.*, of authority to carry on its business and to enter into and carry out contracts. The opinion was expressed that contracts with the vendors to or the promoters of a Company should be binding upon the Company before being confirmed by a meeting of the subscribers; and also that no statutory provisions were necessary as to prospectuses issued to the public. It was not thought necessary to make it compulsory to state in prospectuses the minimum subscription upon which Companies would go to allotment, or to provide that before allotment a certain proportion

of the capital offered for subscription should be subscribed, because if such a requirement were made it could easily be evaded (the Chamber did not disclose in what way the evasion could take place). The Chamber thought it desirable that a register of mortgages, including debentures, should be kept at the registered office of a Company, and be open to the public, but that such mortgages should not be registered as Bills of Sale. It was felt to be undesirable and unnecessary to abolish the powers of Companies (a) to mortgage future chattels or book debts, and (b) to give a floating charge, as the assets of a Company were continually changing, and as, in the event of such abolition, a Company would practically be unable to mortgage anything but freeholds and leaseholds. There was no objection to the power of a Company to mortgage uncalled capital, provided such mortgages were registered; there was no need to insist upon the periodical disclosure of the financial position of Limited Companies, or to provide that the audit of accounts and the form or nature of balance sheets should be statutory. In response to a general question the Chamber said that there appeared to be an inclination to penalise the many and impose unnecessary restrictions and obligations upon them, simply on account of a few delinquents.

In 1891, upon the motion of the Chamber, a resolution was passed by the Association of Chambers of Commerce, requesting the Executive Council to take such steps as they might think best to facilitate the introduction into this country of a Decimal System of Coinage, Weights, and Measures. In 1895 a Select Committee was appointed by Parliament on the motion of Sir Albert K. Rollit (the President of the Association), and after receiving and considering evidence, this Committee came to a practically unanimous conclusion that the "Metric System of Weights and Measures" should be legalised forthwith and after two years made compulsory. Upon the issue of this report the Chamber memorialised the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P. (First Lord of H.M. Treasury), expressing satisfaction at the finding of the Select Committee, and urging that the system referred to should be at once legalised for all purposes; that it should become

Decimal
System of
Coinage and
Weights and
Measures.

compulsory after a lapse of two years ; that its principles and details should be taught in all public elementary schools as a necessary and integral part of arithmetic ; and that decimals should be introduced at an earlier period of the school curriculum than was then the case. A deputation, consisting of delegates from forty-six Chambers of Commerce, subsequently waited upon Mr. Balfour, who, while agreeing with certain of the proposals, disagreed with that which advocated that after two years the metric system should be the only one allowed in this country. Mr. Balfour's objection would find many more sympathisers to-day than it did then, when the advantages of our English system had not been so fully considered as they have been since that time.

Colonial
Trade.

In the autumn of 1895 Mr. Chamberlain (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) forwarded to the Chamber for an expression of their views copy of a draft despatch which he proposed to address to the Governors of Her Majesty's Colonies on the subject of trade between the different parts of the British Empire and the competition of foreign producers. Mr. Chamberlain felt that it would be a great advantage to have the suggestions of the Birmingham Chamber upon the wording of the despatch and the details of the report for which he proposed to call. Had such a communication been received from any Colonial Secretary it is needless to say that the Chamber, consisting as it did of the most substantial commercial and manufacturing firms of the city, would have welcomed it as evidence of the desire of the Government to support the interests of British trade ; but coming as it did from a Colonial Secretary who, a quarter-of-a-century previously had been an active member of the Council of the Chamber, who by virtue of his long municipal career had earned the hearty good will of all his fellow-citizens on account of his distinguished services, and who had subsequently by sheer ability attained to the high position of a Minister of the Crown, it is obvious that it was received with special gratification, and was regarded as being of the utmost importance. In a most appreciative reply the Council stated that they heartily approved of the action proposed to be taken by Mr.

Chamberlain, and that the only suggestions they would venture to make were that in the articles in which the trade of this district was specially interested, such as "Class 30" (hardware and cutlery) and "Class 40D (iron—cast and wrought—and all other iron manufactures), there might be some further sub-division, such as placing "Cutlery" under a separate heading and inserting sub-divisions for brass-foundry, chandeliers, gas and water fittings, bedsteads, cycles, needles, fish hooks, pens, buttons, hollow-ware, chains, tubes, nails, screws, and tin-ware; and that in Class 48 a sub-division should be made of jewellery and personal ornaments. A reply was received from Lord Selborne to the effect that Mr. Chamberlain was gratified to receive the Chamber's suggestions and had taken steps to embody them in an appropriate manner in the despatch as it would finally be sent out.

At their June meeting in 1895 the Council considered the regulations then recently issued by the Commissioners under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act of New Zealand (1894), in pursuance of which the representative of an English house sent to that colony was required to prepare and file at the Government offices a *pro forma* invoice for any goods for which he might obtain orders, and estimate his profit and pay income tax thereon. A letter was addressed to the Colonial Secretary stating that the regulations referred to were highly inimical to trade and calculated to interfere with the export of manufactured goods from this country to the Colony. Every return was required to show the total invoice price of the goods comprised in "every order" procured and of "every other order" executed, with the "name of the person giving the order," the name and address of the principal on whose behalf each such order was procured, and such further particulars as the Commissioner under the Act might from time to time require. The regulations also prescribed other onerous requirements, and set forth the results which would follow if they were not complied with; but it was subsequently stated that there was no intention of calling into action the penal provisions of the regulations except in cases where travellers treated the law with contempt.

Income Tax
in New
Zealand.

Telegraph
and
Telephone
Service.

On June 15th, 1895, the Council presented to the House of Commons a petition, in which they stated that having regard to the success which had attended the acquisition by the Government of the Telegraph System, the time had, in their opinion, arrived when the Government should also acquire the Telephonic System throughout the United Kingdom. It was admitted that the acquisition of the telegraph system by the Government had been of great and undeniable benefit to the public, and this was assigned as a reason why the telephone system should be similarly acquired.

On the same date a petition was presented to the House of Commons calling attention to the destruction of overhead telegraph and telephone wires by storms, and the consequent delays in the transmission of messages, causing considerable loss and inconvenience to the commercial and general public, and urging the passing of an Act of Parliament to enable and empower the Postmaster-General to cause all telegraph wires to be laid underground, or alternatively to provide an underground and over head-system.

Spanish
Customs
Regulations.

Considerable inconvenience was caused during the year to local exporters to Spain in consequence of the Spanish authorities requiring the insertion in certificates of origin for mixed packages of goods of the name and address of the manufacturer or producer of the individual goods exported. The Council thereupon pointed out to the Foreign Secretary that the regulations were unworkable in regard to the productions of this district. A complaint was made to the Spanish authorities by Her Majesty's Ambassador, and the former consented to delay the operation of the new regulations pending negotiations on the subject. How far these negotiations might result the Foreign Secretary did not think it safe to predict. He stated, however, that the Spanish Government were firm in their resolve that only those certificates which were issued by collectors of customs could omit the name and address of the manufacturer or producer, whilst those issued by Chambers of Commerce, magistrates, etc., must contain this indication. Her Majesty's Government, the Foreign Secretary added,

regretted this decision, but they did not see their way further to contest it. A meeting of firms interested was subsequently held, but it is sufficient to state here that although certificates of origin are still issued by Chambers of Commerce, there is now no requirement to give the particulars referred to.

In their annual report the Council stated that opinions ^{State of} on the state of trade were so exceedingly various that it ^{Trade.} was a difficult matter to get at anything like a fair idea of how local manufacturers were supplied with orders, and what calculation they could fairly make for the immediate future. They feared, however, that it must be taken for granted that the lower rates of wages paid on the Continent for manufacturing processes and the "Governmentally assisted" lower rate for land carriage, seriously handicapped British manufacturers in their competition with Continental rivals. The home trade, however, seemed to be fairly well sustained, and had it not been for the continued agricultural depression, might have been thought satisfactory. Nevertheless there was an increasing proportion of German and Belgian-made goods on sale in the home markets, and it seemed "idle to expect the average British housewife, the chief purchaser, to disregard the temptations of at least an apparently useful article at so low a price." With respect to foreign trade generally improved education enabled purchasers from distant countries to get more directly at the sources of supply than was previously the case, and, the Council added :—"it must be borne in mind that Continental-made articles had improved in value." After making further detailed observations the Council ventured to point out to manufacturers the immense importance of deciding upon some plan for making their productions more generally known in distant countries, and ascertaining in a more practical way the peculiar needs of each district to enable them to modify their patterns and shapes accordingly, as well as the mode of packing them up for the market. It is interesting here to note that the Commercial Year Book of the Chamber, the first issue of which was published in 1905, provided a means for advertising effectively the products of our Birmingham factories and workshops.

CHAPTER LXVII.

1896.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 24th, 25th, and 26th March, 1896, the Birmingham Chamber was represented by Mr. P. A. Muntz, M.P., Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. J. B. Chantrill, and Mr. F. Blood, and at the Autumnal Meeting, held at Southampton on the 15th and 16th September, Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. J. B. Chantrill, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Jun., and Mr. Councillor J. W. Tonks.

Wire Gauge.

Mr. J. B. Chantrill, on behalf of the Chamber, moved at the Annual Meeting of the Association:—

“That in the opinion of this Association the present Imperial standard wire gauge should be established as the only legal gauge for metal also.”

In moving the resolution Mr. Chantrill said that in the absence of a fixed gauge for the thickness of metals uncertainty often occurred and caused considerable trouble and risk of loss. He admitted that a change might entail trouble to some districts, but urged that local sentiment and personal conviction must be sacrificed for the general good. The Imperial wire gauge was legalised in 1884 for all kinds of wire, but the gauge was not generally used. An amendment was moved to the effect that an uniform gauge on the metric system should be established as the only legal gauge for metal and wire. After some discussion, which disclosed considerable differences of opinion, the resolution was withdrawn.

Assignment
of Book
Debts.

At the Autumnal Meeting, on the motion of Mr. Councillor Tonks, it was unanimously resolved that the practice of mortgaging book debts to cover cash advances constituted a serious danger to legitimate trading, and that such assignments should be registered after the manner of Bills of Sale.

Commercial
Legislation.

The Council reported that “a normal amount of useful work was accomplished during the session of 1896—one of the shortest sessions of late years.” There were

placed on the statute book, among other Acts, the Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Act, the Conciliation Trade Disputes Act, the Light Railways Act, and the Truck Act. Under the Revenue Act "a new tax of a penny per lb." was imposed on cocoa "with the object of placing British cocoa manufacturers on an equality with their foreign competitors. The Commercial Bills Committee of the Chamber performed its customary and useful public work by studying and reporting upon all Bills submitted to Parliament which were likely to affect the commercial community, and on the recommendation of that Committee petitions were presented to the House of Commons in favour of the Rating of Machinery Bill, the Boiler Inspection and Registration Bill, the Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration Bill and the Conciliation (Trade Disputes) Bill. On the other hand the Council opposed by petition the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Bill, the Sale of Foreign Goods (Prevention of Fraud) Bill, and the Prison-made Good Importation Bill. The first-named Bill dealt with a subject of legislation upon which was successfully resisted for some twenty years. The second-named Bill proposed to prohibit the importation into the United Kingdom of all goods except those specially exempted. Under the third Bill the importation of all prison-made goods was prohibited.

The meeting of the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, which took place on June 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th June, was attended by Messrs. T. J. Walsh and Councillor Tonks, who represented the Chamber thereat. Upon the motion of Mr. Councillor Tonks the following resolution was carried unanimously :—

"(1) That as a first step towards Imperial Federation it is desirable that a Consultative Imperial Council should be formed, whose members for the time being should be resident in the United Kingdom."

"(2) That the Council should be called together in cases where the general interests of the Colonies represented are affected in matters of trade, finance, or Imperial Defence."

“(3) That this Council should consist of members elected by every self-governing Colony in some adequate and relative proportion to its electorate, and that its functions should be purely consultative.”

“(4) That the Crown Colonies should also be represented on this Council.”

Canals.

On the 18th July, 1896, a memorial was presented to the Rt. Hon. C. T. Ritchie, M.P., President of the Board of Trade, calling his attention to the subject of Inland Navigation. In the opinion of the Chamber the proposed legislation on light railways should be accompanied by legislation for the improvement of the canals and for enabling new canals to be cheaply made. To this end they considered it desirable the Board of Trade should order a second return under the Railway and Canal Traffic Act—the first return issued in 1890 being, in their opinion, deficient in several particulars. The Council were also of opinion that having regard to the benefits which accrued to the trade of several Continental countries from the improvement of the inland waterways, it was highly desirable that Her Majesty's Government should appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into and report on the whole subject of inland navigation. As is well known, a Royal Commission was not appointed until nine-and-a-half years after the date of the memorial, and then only after continued pressure by the Birmingham and other Chambers of Commerce. Although the desired end has not yet been reached, the persistent activity of the Chamber for forty or more years in advocating and agitating for improved canals, and the subsequent confirmation of their attitude by an influential Royal Commission, entitle the Chamber to the gratitude of the commercial and general public, for it may be said without any reserve that the Chamber has always been in the forefront of the agitation, and by its work on this question alone has more than justified its century of existence.

Local Train
Service.

A deputation waited upon the District Superintendent of the London and North-Western Railway Company to suggest certain improvements in the local passenger train service, and as a result a breakfast car was placed on the

7-30 a.m. train from Birmingham to Euston, and a dining car on the 7 p.m. train from Euston to Birmingham. A new 9 a.m. express was put on to Liverpool and new expresses at 2-45 p.m. from both Liverpool and Manchester. Notwithstanding these admitted improvements, the Council reported that they were still of opinion that in the matter of the train service to and from the North Birmingham appeared to be treated as a branch station instead of an important city, and that it should have direct communication with the express train service between London and Scotland and *vice versa*, instead of Birmingham passengers being compelled to travel by slow trains to and from Crewe and Stafford.

A Special Committee appointed by the Council, after conference with Mr. R. A. Pinsent, reported in favour of an extension of Trustee Investments, by empowering trustees to invest in Debenture, Charge, Lien, Annuity, or Preference Stocks (the interest on which was not contingent on the year's profits) of any Railway Company in the United Kingdom, which, for a period of not less than ten years prior to the date of investment, had paid on its Ordinary Stock an average dividend of not less than three per cent., and not less than one per cent. in any one year; in Debenture Bonds and Perpetual Annuities of Municipal Corporations with a population of 20,000 or upwards; and in certain other Stocks and Funds.

On the 18th March, 1896, the Council decided to request Her Majesty's Government to make most urgent representations to the French Government with a view to prevent the imposition of any commercial tariff in Madagascar, which would hamper English trade with that island, England having for many years past had the same advantages there as every other country. This was duly transmitted to the Foreign Office, and subsequently a letter was addressed to the Foreign Secretary (the Marquis of Salisbury) stating that it had come to the knowledge of the Chamber that a convention existed between the United States and the Queen of Madagascar, signed in 1881, the commercial provisions of which were the same as those of the Anglo-

Madagascar Treaty of 1865. It was therefore suggested that Lord Salisbury should consider the advisability of a representation being made by the Government to that of the United States as to the community of interest between British and American commerce in the maintenance of both the Treaties referred to.

State of
Trade.

At the end of the year the Council said they were pleased to report a general improvement in trade. "An air of cheerfulness pervaded most branches of local trade at the commencement of the year, and as the spring advanced this feeling became more marked. Then came the great boom in the cycle trade, bringing with it a general improvement in many branches of collateral trades and absorbing a considerable amount of both skilled and unskilled labour." This prosperous branch of business, the Council added, had been the cause of the exploitation of an unusual number of Joint Stock Companies. Railway Companies had prospered, and their shares generally stood well in the market. Money had improved in value with the greater briskness in trade, and our banks had experienced a year of prosperity in consequence. The upward tendency of prices was very marked, not only in this country but also on the Continent, and the prospects of trade for the forthcoming year were very encouraging.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

1897.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. J. W. Tonks, Mr. J. B. Chantrill, Mr. W. N. Whitehead, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary) attended the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 9th, 10th, and 11th March, 1897; and at the Autumnal Meeting, held at Middlesbrough on the 14th and 15th September, the delegates of the Chamber were Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Mr. J. W. Tonks, and Mr. R. P. Yates.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association Mr. T. J. Walsh moved :— Metric System

“That whilst heartily approving of the Weights and Measures (Metric System) Act (1897), this Association is of opinion that the introduction of the Metric System of Weights and Measures should be made compulsory in this country after the lapse of two years, and that the Executive Council be requested to take such steps as they deem desirable to give effect to this resolution.”

An animated discussion took place, but the resolution was ultimately carried “unanimously” and “with acclamation” after being amended by the omission of the words “after a lapse of two years” and the substitution therefor of the words “for which purpose a time limit should be fixed.” As will be seen later on in this volume the Chamber early in the twentieth century, after mature consideration, found good reason to revise their opinion on the ground that it was undesirable and would be detrimental to commercial interests to make the Metric System compulsory to the exclusion of the English system.

The annual report of the Council again opened with an observation as to the uneventful character of commercial legislation during the session—the one striking exception being the Workmens’ (Compensation for Accidents) Act. There was, however, no dearth of proposals for legislation, which it was necessary for the Council to consider with the view of securing as much beneficial legislation as possible, and preventing harmful proposals passing into law. Petitions were presented to Parliament in favour of the Steam Engines’ and Boilers’ Bill, the Retail Dealers in Gold and Silver-plate Bill, the Registration of Firms’ Bill, the Rating of Machinery Bill, the County Courts’ Bill, the Warehousemen’s Certificates Bill, the Boiler Inspection and Registration Bill and the Weights and Measures Metric System Bill; and against the Foreign Prison-made Goods Bill, the Prison-made Goods Importation Bill, and the Workmen’s (Compensation for Accidents) Bill. The latter Bill, the Council in their petition described as unfair in its incidence, no provision being made for contributory Commercial Legislation.

negligence on the part of the workman. It was also urged that it contained no limitation to the responsibility of manufacturers for the partial or total disablement of a workman. Notwithstanding opposition from all parts of the country, however, the Bill was passed into law. It introduced an entirely new principle into the law affecting employer and workman. Previously if an employee suffered any injury in the course of his employment the liability to him of his master depended on the principles governing an action for tort. At common law the employer was liable for his own personal negligence and wilful misconduct through the negligence of anyone to whom superintendence was entrusted by the masters. The liability at common law and also under the Employers' Liability Act remained unaffected by the Act, and continued to be the only remedy in those cases to which the statute did not apply. But in those employments to which the statute did apply compensation for injury thenceforth attached as one of the unseparable conditions of the contracts of service without any consideration of negligence. In other words the employer under the Act was legally bound to guarantee the workman against the consequences of accident sustained in the course of service, subject to a specified pecuniary maximum, and also (under certain circumstances) for the negligence and misconduct of an agent; but he was protected by the rules of law regarding contributory negligence on the part of the workman by the maxim: *Volenti non fit injuria*, and above all by the application of the judicial doctrine of "common employment," except in certain cases where the doctrine had been abolished by the Employers' Liability Act (1880). It will thus be realised that the Workmen's Compensation Bill presented itself to the Council as a revolution in the law relating to the liability of employers, and it is, therefore, not to be wondered at that, viewing its provisions with considerable alarm, they petitioned against it. Had they been able to foresee the extensions which would take place during the succeeding twelve years, and which have thrown a huge burden on to the employer without corresponding benefits to the workman,

their petition would no doubt have been couched in even stronger terms. It is only right to say, however, that there are now few (if any) manufacturers who would refuse to admit that the principles underlying the Workmen's Compensation Act (1897) were commendable.

In 1897 the Government decided to send a special Commissioner to South America to report upon the conditions and prospects of British trade in Central and South America, and the Association of Chambers of Commerce were invited to associate with him one or more delegates representing the Chambers of Commerce of the country. Sir Vincent K. Barrington was appointed for this purpose, and the Chamber guaranteed £25 towards the expenses he would have to incur. Unfortunately, however, he had to resign the position on account of ill-health. Subsequently a special meeting of the Council was held to meet the Government's Special Commissioner (Mr. Thos. Worthington, now Director of the Commercial Intelligence Branch of the Board of Trade), and to discuss with him the objects of his mission as regarded local trades and industries. Mr. Worthington was informed that the principal Birmingham trades consisted of iron, brass and other metal goods of all descriptions, including bedsteads in iron and brass, steel pens, arms and ammunition, glass and glass-wares, jewellery, and leather goods, and that his attention might with advantage "be directed to the selection of patterns of foreign-made goods—two samples or more of each being obtained with securely-attached labels; to packing and wrapping of goods, tariffs (preferential or otherwise), price in all its bearings, freight as compared with that from other countries, terms of credit, the metric system of weights and measures, weight of goods from place of origin, claims and complaints by buyers, and how these complaints are met."

The Chamber received from Her Majesty's Government a number of iron pans which had been collected in Amoy, Swatow, Hong-Kong, and Canton by British Consuls. These were placed on exhibition at the Birmingham Exchange, and a considerable number of manufacturers were invited by the Chamber to inspect

Government
Mission to
South
America.

Iron Pans
from China.

them. Subsequently the Council reported with regret that there was a general consensus of opinion that the pans could not be manufactured in England and shipped to the Straits Settlements and Hong-Kong at the prices at which they were purchased by the British Consuls there.

Exhibition
of Colonial
Samples.

In response to a despatch addressed by the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P. (Colonial Secretary), to the Governors of the Colonies, a collection of foreign-made goods was received. This collection was exhibited by the Chamber in the Examination Hall of the Municipal Technical School, and the exhibition "evoked considerable interest and was largely attended by manufacturers, merchants, and artisans."

Commercial
Intelligence.

A Departmental Committee was appointed by the Board of Trade to consider what means could be adopted to increase and further utilise the intelligence supplied respecting foreign trade by the National Administrative Departments for the Service of British Commerce and Industry. Mr. T. J. Walsh, Chairman of the Chamber, gave evidence before this Committee, which, as is now well known, resulted directly in the establishment of the Commercial Intelligence Branch of the Board of Trade, and subsequently in the improvement of the commercial side of the Board to an appreciable degree.

Passenger
Train
Service.

In continuation of their report for 1896 the Council had the satisfaction in 1897 of reporting that as a result of their efforts the passenger train service to and from the North was improved, and that Birmingham had been provided with direct communication with the express train service between London and Scotland, certain trains having been arranged to run through Birmingham. There were also made certain improvements in the Birmingham to Manchester and Liverpool train service, and the local services were also augmented.

County
Court Rules.

A letter was addressed to the Lord Chancellor in regard to certain proposed alterations in the County Court Rules. In the opinion of the Council the general effect of the alterations would be to favour unduly the defendants, and, at the same time, to impose on plaintiffs

a needless and vexatious burden, thereby tending to defeat the objects for which the County Courts existed by rendering it both difficult and expensive for plaintiffs to commence County Court actions. Furthermore, under the proposed new rules plaintiff would, in cases where the debtor resided more than twenty miles away, not only have to show that the balance of convenience was in favour of suing in the Court where the plaintiff resided, but be bound to deposit a sum in Court which would in many cases be as much as if not more than the debt sued for. In the case of large firms this meant they would have continually to keep a large sum deposited in Court, which was manifestly unjust to plaintiffs and quite unnecessary. Other objections were alleged against the rules, and the Council stated in the conclusion of their representation that if any alteration in the County Court Rules were desirable it should be in the direction of simplifying rather than introducing further complication to increase the difficulty in the way of instituting proceedings, as would be done by the proposed new rules. It was therefore hoped the rules would be substantially modified.

CHAPTER LXIX.

1898.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 15th, 16th, and 17th March, 1898, the Chamber was represented by Mr. T. J. Walsh, Mr. J. H. R. Meyer, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary). Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. T. J. Walsh moved, on behalf of the Chamber, Foreign
Customs
Fines.
 “That as fines are frequently imposed by foreign Customs authorities upon manifestly clerical mistakes in declarations, which forms of declaration are only intended to prevent fraud, it is desirable in the interests of British exporters that the Executive

Council suggest to Her Majesty's Foreign Office the advisability of instructing British Consuls, upon their aid being invoked by British subjects, to give special assistance in matters of this description."

One of the supporters of the resolution said it was a most important one, because the question it raised was "one which made the life of exporters perfectly hideous."

He mentioned a case where a friend of his had recently sent a case of ordinary handkerchiefs to Spain. "They were declared by a miserable junior as silk handkerchiefs," and the duty charged was about twenty times the value of the goods. Many other cases were mentioned, and, as might be expected, the resolution was carried unanimously.

Commercial Legislation.

In their annual report the Council stated that although over three hundred public Bills were introduced into Parliament during the session only sixty-two received the Royal assent. So far as commercial legislation was concerned this was again described as "uneventful," and the Council expressed the opinion that the "continued delay" in passing many Bills affecting the commercial interests of the country was much to be regretted. A large number of Bills submitted in 1898 was considered, and the Council petitioned in favour of the Merchandise Marks Bill (suggesting an extension of one of the clauses), of the Steam Engines' and Boilers' (Persons in Charge) Bill, of the Registration of Firms' Bill, of the County Courts Jurisdiction Bill, and of the Andoversford and Stratford-on-Avon Railway Bill. Petitions were presented against the Shops Bill and also against the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Bill.

Birmingham University.

A memorial was presented to the Executive Committee appointed at a Towns' Meeting to promote the formation of the Birmingham University, urgently pressing upon them the desirability of establishing as an important part of the University Scheme a School of Commerce, and including the teaching of modern languages as specially applied to the needs of commerce and manufacture. Subsequently the Chairman and Vice-

Chairman were invited to meet the Council of the Mason University College, and, as is well known, the outcome of the suggestions made was the establishment of the Faculty of Commerce, under the able guidance of Prof. W. J. Ashley.

A memorial was addressed to the Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P.) urging the adoption of the Metric System of Weights and Measures in the Customs House and Post Office and in the Government Departments which had to deal with contracts, in order to prepare the way for the general adoption of the system.

The Council addressed a letter to the Foreign Secretary urging that Her Majesty's Government should bring all legitimate pressure to bear upon Foreign Governments giving sugar bounties with a view to inducing them to withdraw the same.

In October the attention of the Council was directed to the possible effect of the Spanish-American War upon the trade of this country with the Spanish West India Islands, and especially with Cuba, and a memorial was addressed to the Government urging them to do all in their power to secure for British goods as favourable treatment in the Islands as might be accorded to the products of the United States of America. It was pointed out that the effect of a preferential tariff in favour of the United States would probably be to deprive British merchants and manufacturers of a long-established and important trade, and to give the United States a virtual monopoly of these markets. A reply was received to the effect that in any change that might take place in the position of Cuba every effort would be made to secure protection for British trade.

For a long time brass and copper rods had been used as currency by the interior natives of the Niger Coast, and the rods for this purpose were largely made in Birmingham. The Consul-General for the Protectorate submitted for the approval of the Foreign Office an ordinance which would, in the opinion of the Council, have altogether prohibited the importation of the rods referred to or would have placed such difficulties in the way of their use as to amount to prohibition of the trade.

The ostensible objects held forth in favour of the ordinance were that the rods were a form of currency, tending to facilitate the Slave Trade, and that it was desirable to encourage and promote the use of silver coinage in lieu of such barter currency. The Council were somewhat alarmed at the proposed ordinance, and a strong representation was addressed to the Foreign Office urging that the ordinance be not confirmed, and asserting that no attempt whatever had been or could be made to show in what way slavery was more facilitated by the native currency rods than it would be by a forced silver currency. A prompt reply was received from the Marquis of Salisbury, stating that although he was of opinion that the change from barter to the use of coin was desirable it would be practically impossible to enforce it by means of legislation. As a result the ordinance was not confirmed.

French
West Africa.

There was a question pending as to the establishment of French Differential Duties on English Goods in West Africa, and a letter was sent to the Foreign Secretary urging that inasmuch as foreign nations had free access to markets opened up by this country the Government should "insist on reciprocity of treatment and abolition of differential duties."

French
Customs
Duties on
Cycles.

An agitation was reported to be taking place in France with the view of inducing the French Legislature to impose largely-increased duties on cycles and cycle component parts, and the Council appointed a Special Committee to consider and report upon the matter. Upon that report a letter was addressed to the Government urging them to take such steps as might be deemed expedient to safeguard the interests of British manufacturers "by bringing pressure to bear upon the French Government to endeavour to prevent the prohibitive increase of duties above referred to." Previous to the year 1892 the duty on cycles in France was 120 francs per 100 kilos. In that year it was raised to 220 francs per 100 kilos. The Cycle and Auto-Car Trades' Committee in France were agitating for a duty of 500 or 600 francs per 100 kilos. Under the prevailing duty the trade, which was carried on in cycles and component

parts thereof, was considerable, although it had been very much reduced by the increase from 120 francs; but it was asserted that the suggested duty would be entirely prohibitive. The Foreign Office replied that the matter was being carefully watched, but they were of opinion that no immediate action was necessary, as the Customs Commission had already reported that the matter was not urgent, and that no decision could be come to until a careful inquiry had been made into the facts put forward by those advocating the increase. "In a semi-official communication to the Press," the Foreign Office letter continued, "it was stated that the Commission have been struck by the divergence of opinion existing between the advocates and the adversaries of higher duties as to the value and weight of the importations of cycles into France." It was added, however—thus showing the comparative impotence of the English Government in the matter—that they had "no right to protest on Treaty grounds," and that any representations at the moment would be more likely to do harm than good to the English trade.

The Council reported that the general trade of the country during 1898 was good, and that a plentiful harvest accompanied by better prices stimulated the home trade. The engineering and iron trades had been exceptionally well employed, owing partly to the accumulation of work as a consequence of the Engineering Strike and also to the heavy requirements for naval and shipbuilding purposes. Foreign trade had been checked by the Engineers' Strike, which only terminated in January, 1898; by the Coal Strike in South Wales, which commenced in April and terminated in September; by international complications in China, consequent upon the aggressive action of Russia; by the after-effects of the Famine and Plague in India; and by the Spanish-American War, which commenced in April; but, notwithstanding all this, the conditions did not give rise to any serious concern. In the prevalent keen competition, however, the Council added, the district was seriously handicapped by the heavy charges for inland transport and the comparatively high rates of

State of
Trade.

freight charged by the Steamship Companies from English ports as compared with the rates ruling from Continental and American ports.

CHAPTER LXX.

1899.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. H. C. Field, Mr. F. B. Goodman, Mr. Hermann Schurhoff, and Mr. W. F. Haydon (Secretary) were the Chamber's representatives at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 14th, 15th, and 16th March, 1899; and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Belfast on the 5th and 6th September, the delegate was Mr. T. J. Walsh.

Metric
System.

Mr. T. J. Walsh at the Autumnal Meeting moved a resolution reaffirming the frequently expressed opinion of the Association that the metric system of weights and measures should be made compulsory in the United Kingdom, and urging that it should be used in all Government Departments and its teaching in elementary schools be strictly enforced. The resolution was carried unanimously with an addition to the effect that it be communicated to Chambers of Commerce and Trade Organisations with a strong representation that they should use their influence with the School Boards within their districts to have the metric system properly taught as authorised in the education code.

The
Chamber's
Progress.

During the year 1899 the Chamber was able to record that considerable progress had been made. The membership was increased from 202 to 282; greater interest was taken in the proceedings; there was greater activity all round; and the influence and usefulness of the Chamber was considerably advanced.

The examination of proposals for legislation were as usual systematically examined and petitions were presented in favour of the following Bills:—the Registration of Firms' Bill, the Rating of Machinery Bill, and the Merchandise Marks Act (1887) Amendment Bill, the object of which was *inter alia* to enable British and Irish goods to be distinguished from imported goods. The following Bills were opposed by petitions:—The Boilers' Inspection and Registration Bill, the Workmen's Compensation Act (1897) Amendment Bill, which proposed an extension of the law, and the Telegraphs (Telephone Communication, etc.) Bill.

Commercial
Legislation.

The object of the Telegraphs (Telephone Communication) Bill was to confer on municipalities an optional power to establish telephone systems in their respective areas. Early in the year the Council had unanimously resolved that having regard to the disadvantages arising out of the working of the telephone system under the dual control of the Government and the National Telephone Co., Ltd., it was expedient that the Government should take immediate steps to acquire the undertaking of the Company upon just and reasonable terms as between the nation and the company's shareholders. In May a petition was presented to the House of Commons in opposition to the Bill on the ground the multiplicity of systems which it would authorise to be created would be vexatious and unsatisfactory. Letters were subsequently addressed to the local members of Parliament, and vigorous efforts were made to defeat the Bill. It was, however, ultimately passed into law, but subsequent history has shown that the views of the Chamber as to single control were those which would finally commend themselves to the country. As might have been expected municipal telephones were not a workable proposition, and very few local authorities attempted to avail themselves of the powers conferred by the Act. Most of those who did found the experiment a miserable failure.

Telephone
Service.

During the year the Education Committee of the Chamber instituted an exhaustive and valuable inquiry into what was being done in commercial education by

Commercial
Education.

the public establishments of the city, and had long interviews with gentlemen representing local educational bodies, from whom much useful information was obtained. As the result of their labours the Committee presented a voluminous report with numerous appendices covering thirty-five printed foolscap pages, giving the result of their investigations, with suggestions for a further development of a consecutive system of practical business training. The report was adopted by the Council and copies were widely circulated among the educational bodies of the district, British Chambers of Commerce, and the London and Provincial Press. In the course of their report the Committee said that the rapid development of manufactures on the Continent and in the United States had so entirely changed the condition of trade during the preceding two or three decades that the United Kingdom no longer held unchallenged the position of the leading manufacturing nation in the world.

“ But the fact that, till comparatively recent times, we have been the leading manufacturers and distributors of merchandise in the world has had the effect of making our manufacturers and workpeople less ready than they ought to be to adapt themselves to the needs of other countries, as also less ready to extend their experience and learn what other nations are doing. In former times other nations had to adapt their requirements to what they were able to obtain from us, and we had no need to study their requirements ; they had everything to learn from us and we nothing to learn from them. Now this is entirely changed. Whilst other nations have shown themselves apt scholars in all that we had to teach, we have now a great deal to learn from them.”

The Committee were of opinion that one of the most important objects to be aimed at was familiarity with commerce and manufacture as carried on in foreign countries. We wanted information as to their methods of manufacture and distribution, and, above all, we wanted to learn the requirements of other markets so as to be able to adapt our supplies and our mode of dealing to these requirements. Apathy in these matters had already

undoubtedly resulted in an enormous loss of trade to the country, and the chief danger in the future seemed to be its continuance. It was necessary, therefore, that not only the future principals of business houses but also the clerks should be brought up as far as possible with a wider knowledge of business methods. Special attention should be given to commercial geography, the teaching of which should be supplemented in elementary schools by frequent lectures, accompanied by limelight and other illustrations, in order to familiarise the pupils with the life, climate, and other conditions in foreign countries, and with the articles used and produced in those countries. In the higher schools the Committee considered the education already given should be continued, but that special attention should be given to the requirements of foreign countries, modes of doing business, trade routes, adaptability of a country to special manufactures or products, etc. With respect to languages the Committee said that there were few countries where a boy leaving a higher school knew so little of modern languages as the average English boy did, and that one reason of this probably was that the number of efficient teachers was comparatively small. It was worth notice that in Germany, where modern languages were most excellently taught, they thought very highly of modern languages as a mental training, and it would surprise English people to know that in the great commercial centre of Hamburg with over 600,000 inhabitants out of 124 public schools, Latin was only taught in three, while modern languages were taught in every boys' school. The Committee then expressed the view that in the case of pupils beginning a foreign language certainly not less than four hours a week should be given to it in school hours. They were also of opinion that there was need in Birmingham for one school at which a purely modern education should be given where modern languages should take the chief place among the subjects taught. Such a school, it was stated, would make a stepping-stone to the Faculty of Commerce in the University, and the Committee suggested that with a view to meet this need one of the Branch Grammar schools, preferably the Five Ways School,

might be remodelled on these lines, which probably would not entail so great a change as would at first appear. In conclusion the Committee strongly urged upon commercial and manufacturing employers of labour the necessity of requiring a definite standard of commercial knowledge in all applicants for situations.

University
Faculty of
Commerce.

The Chairman of the Council of Mason University College (Alderman F. C. Clayton) forwarded to the Chamber the outlines of a scheme for the creation of a Faculty of Commerce in the proposed University, and several meetings of the specially-appointed Committee were held as a result of which the Council of the Chamber suggested a series of subjects to form the curriculum of the Faculty. These comprised Modern Languages, Economics, Commercial History, Commercial Geography, Elements of Commercial Law, Mathematics and Commercial Arithmetic, and, as voluntary subjects, Engineering, Chemistry, Physics, and Metallurgy.

Midland
Institute.

The Council had the satisfaction of reporting that an organised Evening School of Commerce was established by the Midland Institute in conference with the Chamber, the Council of Mason University College, the Birmingham School Board, the Head Master of King Edward's School, and the Head Masters and Head Mistresses of King Edward's Grammar Schools, with the object of providing a practical commercial training for persons who, having left school, were entering upon a business career or who were already engaged in business. Believing that the school met a public want and that the scheme would meet with the approval of every member of the Chamber, the Council gave instructions for a circular to be sent to each member of the Chamber, enclosing the prospectus of the school, with the object of bringing it prominently under their notice in the hope that they would not only urge their employees to attend the classes at the school but that they would also, as far as possible, offer facilities for their so doing.

Trade of
Sierra Leone.

Mr. F. B. Goodman, the Chairman of the Chamber, with the representatives of other important Chambers of Commerce, in response to an invitation, waited upon the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., the Colonial

Secretary, on the 23rd May, 1899, and discussed with him the commercial position and prospects of Sierra Leone. Mr. Goodman was fortified by a resolution of the Council to the effect that having given full consideration to the subject they were of opinion that the Hut Tax should be continued, but that its collection should not be too rigorously enforced and that native prejudice should be conciliated to the greatest possible extent in its collection ; that they would gladly welcome an increased duty on spirits, and trusted every effort would be made to induce France and Germany to co-operate with this country in restricting the trade ; and that while they were not in a position to express an opinion on the direction of the proposed railways, they desired to express their hearty approval of the desire of the Colonial Secretary to develop the country and their high appreciation of the efforts he was making in the interests of the Colony and of British trade.

An agitation was raised by makers of cycles in Austria with the object of considerably increasing the Import Duty on Cycle Fittings and Accessories in that country. Immediately the Council made a representation to the Foreign Office, stating that the increased duty would, if put into force, entirely prohibit the export of such goods from this country to Austria, and that it would appear to be a violation of the Treaty of November 26th, 1877. The Council trusted that the Government would cause enquiries to be made on the subject, and, in the event of the agitation being continued, take such steps as they might deem desirable to protect the interests of British manufacturers of cycle fittings and accessories. The reply of the Government was that they did not see their way to oppose any agitation raised by Austrian merchants and manufacturers with the object of effecting any alteration in the rates of duty on imports. They added that an alteration of duties would not be a violation of the Commercial Treaty with this country.

On the 30th December, 1898, an Act to amend the law relating to Licences and Stamps was promulgated in Cape Colony enacting that every Joint Stock Company carrying on business there should annually take out a licence for

Austrian
Duty on
Cycle
Fittings.

New
Licences on
Joint Stock
Companies in
Cape Colony.

which there should be payable for every £100 or fraction of £100 of the subscribed capital of such Company the sum of 1/-. The Council regarded this as a most objectionable tax on the enterprise of Companies registered in Great Britain and which had established branches in Cape Colony and as being unfair in its incidence and detrimental to trade. The Colonial Secretary (Mr. Chamberlain) in reply to a deputation said he was not prepared to interfere in the matter, which was one entirely within the competence of the Cape Government, but promised to transmit their representations to the Governor for the consideration of his Ministers.

Sugar
Bounties.

A letter was addressed to the Foreign Office calling attention to the disastrous effect upon British interests caused by the Sugar Bounties paid by Foreign Governments, and stating that the Council were of opinion that these bounties had worked and were working great evils to the trade of the country, as well as vital injury to many British Colonies and Dependencies. As in the previous year the Government was urged to bring all legitimate pressure to bear with the view of inducing the Foreign Governments concerned to withdraw the bounties.

Commerce in
War Time.

The Council passed a resolution suggesting that the British Government should, in the interests of British commerce, either take or support such steps as might be necessary to secure by international agreement the exemption of all private property at sea from capture or destruction in time of war, unless contraband or seized in violating blockades.

State of
Trade.

According to the annual report of the Council the year 1899 was one of prosperity and expansion marred by the sad outbreaks of war in South Africa in the month of September. The prosperity was said to have been fairly distributed over the whole country, but the iron and metal trades were specially benefitted. In 1897 indications of an improved state of affairs became apparent and prices "commenced to stiffen," but in the early part of 1899 the change became marked. With their customary caution the Council pointed out that the prosperous condition of trade had been enjoyed by other countries, as well as by ourselves, especially by America and

Germany, and as the power of production of those countries had undoubtedly increased it was obvious that when the then existing abnormal demand for goods was satisfied they would be in a stronger position as competitors than before. The Council therefore expressed the hope that manufacturers in Birmingham and district would utilise the time of prosperity to adopt the very best plant and to improve their methods of manufacture in every way possible.

CHAPTER LXXI.

1900.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 13th, 14th, and 15th March, 1900, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. R. P. Yates, F. B. Goodman, J. S. Taylor, E. Parkes, M.P., and W. F. Haydon (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting held in Paris the delegates were Messrs. F. B. Goodman, W. N. Whitehead, T. J. Walsh, and J. H. R. Meyer.

Mr. F. B. Goodman moved, on behalf of the Chamber, at the Annual Meeting of the Association, that in the opinion of the Association it was highly desirable that an application be made to Her Majesty's Government asking that equally liberal Government grants may be given to commercial subjects as were then given to science subjects in all schools to which such grants were voted; and that the Executive Council be requested to take such action as they thought best either by deputation or memorial to press the matter upon the Government. After a vigorous debate, in which the resolution was opposed by Mr. (now Sir) Algernon Firth (President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce), it was carried with the addition of the following words, suggested by Mr. Goodman, viz. :—"And that courses of study in commercial subjects for elementary and advanced grades be drawn up by the

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Commercial
Education.

Secondary Education Department as is now done for science and art, and that the Secondary Education Department conduct commercial examinations in advanced grades only."

**Cape Colony
Licences for
Limited
Companies.** At the same meeting Mr. J. S. Taylor moved :—
"That in the opinion of the Association the annual licence imposed by the Government of Cape Colony assessed upon the subscribed capital of British Joint Stock Companies is unfair in its incidence and detrimental to trade, and that the Executive Council be requested to communicate with the Cape Government urging the repeal or reduction of these licences." The resolution was carried unanimously.

**Metric
System.** Another resolution, which was moved on behalf of the Chamber by Mr. R. P. Yates, was in favour of the compulsory adoption in this country of the Metric System of Weights and Measures. This was carried unanimously.

**Rating of
Machinery.** Yet another resolution moved by the Chamber was that submitted by Mr. W. F. Haydon and adopted, reaffirming the urgent necessity for the passing into law of the Rating of Machinery Bill, the object of which was to relieve all machinery not attached to the freehold from local rates.

**Commercial
Legislation.** In the paragraph dealing with Commercial Legislation the Council in their annual report opened with the following words :—

"During a year marked by events in the national history of the greatest interest and importance, the proceedings of Parliament have been, almost beyond precedent, stagnant, and unexciting."

This condition of affairs was due largely to the war in South Africa and the tragic crisis in China. Notwithstanding all this, however, there was a considerable number of Bills which required watching, and petitions from the Chamber were presented in favour of the Companies' Bill (1900), subject to certain amendments which were set forth in detail; of the County Courts Jurisdiction Bill—a Bill to enlarge the jurisdiction of the County Courts; of the Registration of Firms' Bill; and of the Trust Funds Bill. In another petition certain amendments were suggested to the Railways (Prevention

of Accidents) Bill ; and petitions were lodged against the London and India Joint Committee Bill and the London and St. Katherine Docks and East and West India Docks Bill, both of which proposed increased tolls on goods carried over the railways.

The attention of the Council was directed during the year to the unsatisfactory working of the International Convention on Patent Rights (1883) in the United States of America, and a memorial was addressed to the Foreign Secretary (The Marquis of Salisbury, K.G.) pointing out that an inventor of the city had been refused in the United States the benefits of the Convention referred to, whilst American inventors claimed and obtained the benefits of the Convention in Great Britain—a state of affairs which, it was asserted, was manifestly one-sided and constituted a grave injustice to British subjects. Her Majesty's Government was, therefore, requested to urge upon the United States Government the observance of the terms and conditions of the Convention, and to make such terms retrospective in cases similar to one specifically referred to, whereby British subjects had suffered a loss of their just rights. It would appear from the voluminous correspondence which took place over the case that although the United States were parties to the Convention, the latter was “not self-executing,” but required “legislation to render it effective for the modification of the existing laws” of the United States. Many similar cases could be quoted where International Conventions had been entered into by a number of States and their internal laws have been entirely dissimilar, so that whilst in one case the existence of the Convention would give security, in another no such security would be obtainable owing to the defective condition of the internal laws. In the present instance the Convention provided for six months priority. The English patent in the case under notice was sealed on the 11th March, 1897, and the application for registration in the United States made on the 21st May, 1897 ; but the United States Examiner decided that the particular part of the Convention mentioned was not effective in that country, as no legislation had been passed making it so. It was,

Inter-
national
Convention
on Patent
Rights.

however, satisfactory to the Chamber to be informed ultimately that the United States Commissioners of Patents would recommend such an amendment of the law as would make the Convention effective.

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

The Fourth Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire was held in the Hall of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers, London, on June 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1900, under the Presidency of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Selborne (Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies), when the Chamber was represented by Mr. F. B. Goodman and Mr. Councillor J. W. Tonks. Mr. Tonks, on behalf of the Chamber, moved a resolution, which, after some amendment, was passed in the following form :—

“That the feeling of Imperial citizenship throughout the Empire and the sense of union already attained between the Mother Country and her Colonies render practical and advisable the formation at an early date of an Imperial Consultative Council of Representatives, in which the Motherland and the Colonies shall have due representation, to consider and advise upon Colonial and Imperial questions, and that the matter be brought under the notice of Her Majesty’s Government.”

Parlia-
mentary
Elections.

The Council, by memorial, called attention of the Home Secretary to the fact that Parliamentary Elections in this country were allowed to extend over too long a period, and that the excitement attending many of them interfered much with business and caused loss to the mercantile community. They also pointed out that in France and Germany and the United States all elections took place in one day, and urged that Her Majesty’s Government would so amend the Rules as to provide that polling in boroughs should take place on the same day and that County pollings should be curtailed so that, if possible, they might all be concluded in one week.

Brazilian
Customs’
Regulations.

The attention of the Council was early in the year 1900 directed to the new Brazilian Customs’ Regulations, dealing with the legalisation of invoices and bills of lading, the provisions of which would, if put into operation, have seriously hampered British trade

with the Brazils. A memorial was prepared and forwarded to the Marquis of Salisbury, and a circular, accompanied by a copy of the memorial, was sent to twenty-five of the leading Chambers of Commerce in the country directing their attention to the regulations, and asking for the support of their Chambers in endeavouring to obtain their withdrawal. In the memorial it was pointed out *inter alia* that the new regulations required two invoices to be presented to the Brazilian Consulate in the place from whence goods were consigned for legalisation by the Consul, one being returned to the shipper and the other remaining in the Consulate for statistical purposes. The objections of the Chamber to this requirement were that local Consuls were usually merchants and that, if an invoice remained in their possession, it placed at their disposal every detail of the shipper's business, *i.e.*, customers' names, prices, and every trade secret; and that as the Birmingham trade with the Brazils largely consisted of an enormous assortment of hardware articles the writing of duplicate invoices entailed much extra labour.

As a result of the representations made to the Brazilian Government by Her Majesty's Minister the regulations were to some extent modified, but the requirement as to duplicate invoices was retained.

A memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary (the Marquis of Salisbury) stating that the attention of the Chamber had been called to a Bill which had passed the House of Representatives of the United States of America, and was then before the Senate, which, if passed into law, would practically annihilate the British hardware trade with Porto Rico. It was added that orders had already been countermanded pending the decision of the Senate and that this showed the urgency of the position. Under the provisions of the Bill all goods entering Porto Rico would be subjected to the full Dingley Tariff, except goods shipped to Porto Rico from the United States, upon which only 15% of such duty would be payable, thus giving an advantage to the United States of 85% over all other countries trading with the Island. Continuing the Chamber pointed out that eighteen months previously

Preferential
Tariff in
Porto Rico.

they had pointed out to the Foreign Secretary the possible effect of the Spanish-American War—an effect which was likely to be realised unless Her Majesty's Government could bring sufficient pressure to bear on the United States Government to induce them to accord equal rights to British traders. Copies of the memorial were sent to the principal Chambers of Commerce, suggesting the desirability of their summoning special meetings with a view to prompt action being taken for the protection of the trades of their respective districts. All efforts, however, proved unavailing, because the British Government were unable to take any effective steps for preventing injury to the traders of this country—a condition of affairs that has been only too common during the last half-century.

**The Gun
Trade.**

At their June meeting in 1900 the President of the Chamber brought under the notice of the Council the subject of the decline of the Birmingham gun trade, and suggested the appointment of a Committee to inquire into and report upon the matter. A Committee, consisting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Mr. R. G. Northwood, and Mr. R. P. Yates, was appointed to consider the advisability of instituting the enquiry, and a letter was subsequently addressed to Mr. Thomas Turner (Proof Master) asking whether the Guardians of the Proof House would be willing, either individually or collectively, to contribute towards the expenses, which were estimated at about £50. A reply was received that the Proof House had no power to use their funds for the purpose, and as the members of the gun trade did not seem willing to provide the requisite funds the enquiry had to be held in abeyance.

**Railway
Passengers'
Luggage.**

A letter was addressed to the Local Railway Companies, stating that the subject of the liability of passengers' luggage had been under consideration. It was complained that valuable luggage was constantly lost in rail transit, and that all liability was invariably repudiated by the Railway Companies. The Chamber admitted that such loss could be covered by insurance, but the Railway Companies themselves would not insure the same unless sent as parcels, in which case the rate

was absolutely prohibitive; the obvious result being the great increase of premiums charged by the underwriters undertaking the business. In regard to the loss of travellers' samples it was pointed out that the injury done was far in excess of the intrinsic and insurable value of the goods, and it was therefore urged that reasonable care should be taken for the safety of the luggage entrusted to the Railway Companies. A statement was submitted with the letter showing the experience of one firm, who had had about £2,000 worth of jewellery stolen from the "Railway Luggage Locker." They complained that within a limited period they had several times had luggage put out at stations other than those for which it was labelled; that luggage had been handed to persons who were not entitled to it; that several times their travellers had found loose labels on or about their luggage—a condition of affairs which might have been caused by porters carelessly dropping such labels or have been due to frustrated attempts to fix a wrong label, with a view to robbery; that the label racks at the railway stations were invariably left quite unprotected; that luggage put into a through train frequently arrived by a later train without any explanation being obtainable; that registered or checked luggage was left on the platform and subsequently taken to the Lost Property Office; that registered luggage left on the platform was sometimes given to the owner without production of the receipt ticket; and that the representative of a neighbouring firm had recently seen his luggage in process of being re-labelled, and, on challenging the porter concerned, had been informed that it was "all right" and "the gentleman had changed his mind." The Chamber suggested that all luggage should be numbered and duplicates of the numbers given to the passengers—the luggage to be given up only on production of the duplicate; that luggage racks should be properly safeguarded; that the luggage should always be kept in the guard's van; that there should always be someone in charge of it; that greater care should be exercised; or, as an alternative, that all restrictions as to class of luggage and amount of liability of Railway Company should be removed, or, at any rate, considerably

decreased. Letters were received from the Railway Companies stating that the matters had been set down for discussion at the Clearing House Conference, but no further reply was received during 1900.

Canal
Develop-
ment.

A resolution of the Council, which was passed unanimously, was transmitted to the Lord Mayor urging that the City Council should appoint certain of their members to sit upon a Committee, which, it was stated, was about to be formed to investigate a scheme for the development of the then existing canals connecting the Midlands with the Bristol Channel.

State of
Trade.

The Council reported that the year 1900 opened with every appearance of prosperity. During 1899 prices had risen rapidly, and, although there were signs that the limit had nearly been reached, the advance continued until early in February, 1900, when some weakness was shown. This weakness gradually developed, and a rapid decline took place in the closing months of the year ; but manufacturers were, nevertheless, actively employed, so that the position of the workers was favourable. The Council felt, however, that a time of depression was at hand, and expressed the view that our traders were almost sure to feel the effects of foreign competition to a greater extent than had been experienced in the past, and that to meet this successfully they would need to exercise great efforts and enterprise.

CHAPTER LXXII.

1901.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held at the Hotel Metropole, London, on March 12th, 13th, and 14th, 1901, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. F. B. Goodman, T. J. Walsh, E. Parkes, M.P., and W. F. Haydon (Secretary) ; whilst

at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Nottingham on September 3rd and 4th, 1901, the Chamber's delegates were Messrs. F. B. Goodman, J. W. Tonks, and T. J. Walsh.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association Mr. J. W. Tonks (on behalf of the Chamber) once more moved a resolution to the effect that the practice of mortgaging book debts to cover cash advances constituted a serious danger to legitimate trading, and that all assignments of such debts should be registered "after the manner of Bills of Sale." Mr. Tonks pointed out that a similar motion had been adopted unanimously on two previous occasions, and at this meeting it was also carried.

In their annual report for 1901 the Council stated that they had long desired to increase the interest of the commercial community in the work of the Chamber. The Chamber had already endured for nearly ninety years, and it is not to be wondered at that the Council at that time—a body of influential and enterprising commercial men—arrived at the opinion that they had reached a time when it was absolutely essential that there should be a larger membership and an increased influence, if any impressions at all worth recording were to be made on the Government of the day. Throughout its career the Chamber, like many other voluntary bodies, had been seriously retarded in its progress by the lack of financial support, which resulted in preventing the Council from doing what they desired, namely: not only making representations to the Government but also "backing them up" by some considerable amount of evidence. Without the weight of membership this was, of course, quite impossible—to say nothing of the financial problem which, in itself, was of great importance. The Council therefore appealed for increased support, and arrived at the conclusion that the then present occupancy, in a partial way, of the premises granted at a nominal rent by the courtesy of the Birmingham Exchange (Iron Exchange) Authorities was to be deprecated, and that the Chamber should "rent its own rooms for its sole use." It was therefore decided that it was desirable that a Secretary should be appointed, whose sole function should be to

Registration
of Mortgages
of Book
Debts.

Reorganiza-
tion of the
Chamber.

attend to the affairs of the Chamber, and who should be accessible during office hours to members. The Council were not, however, prepared to stay at this point; they desired that the offices to be acquired should be sufficiently commodious to permit not only of the accommodation of the staff, but also of the exhibition of samples of goods which might be sent to Birmingham by Her Majesty's representatives in other countries or in British Dominions. They therefore appealed to the members of the Chamber to contribute to a special fund for three years. The result of this appeal will be mentioned in the next chapter.

Commercial
Legislation.

As in previous years the Commercial Bills Committee considered and reported upon a number of Bills introduced into Parliament. Petitions were presented to the House of Commons in favour of the Merchandise Marks Act (1887) Amendment Bill, the object of which was to enable British-made goods to be distinguished from similar goods imported; in favour of the Registration of Firms' Bill, which, as in past years, provided for the registration of firms carrying on business under names or styles other than their own; and also in favour of the Prevention of Corruption Bill, the object of which was to put a stop to the grievous practice of illicit commissions which had become widespread and seriously detrimental to the interests of employers.

British
Trade with
Cuba.

A memorial was addressed to the Foreign Secretary (the Marquis of Lansdowne, K.G.) directing his immediate attention to the "imminent impending danger to British trade with the Island of Cuba, arising out of the [then] existing relations of the United States of America with that Island," and urging His Majesty's Government to give their most serious and prompt consideration to the important issues involved. The Chamber pointed out that on the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in the year 1898 they called the attention of the Foreign Office to the possible effect of the war upon the trade of this country with the Spanish West Indian Islands, more especially with Cuba, and urged upon Her late Majesty's Government the importance of doing all in their power to protect British interests. The City of Birmingham, it was again

pointed out, was largely interested in trade with the Spanish West Indian Islands. The once considerable trade with the Island of Porto Rico had been practically closed by the introduction of a tariff in the interests of the United States of America, and a similarly disastrous result threatened the country in regard to the more important and extensive British trade with the Island of Cuba—the loss of which would assuredly inflict serious financial injury upon the merchants, manufacturers, and shipping community of Great Britain. Whilst not intending to go into the question of American politics the Chamber added that they could not close their eyes to the fact that both public opinion and the proceedings of the legislature in the United States appeared to favour the complete control, at an early date, of the whole of the foreign relations of the Island of Cuba, and, in their opinion, an American Protectorate would probably result in the imposition of a tariff of a character protective of American interests and generally hostile to European trade. They therefore urged that prompt steps might be taken by His Majesty's Government “to use every means at their disposal for the protection of British commercial interests in Cuba, with a view to save British trade with that island from annihilation.” Upon the receipt of this memorial the Foreign Office communicated with His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington, who subsequently replied that there was no ground for apprehension that the American tariff would be imposed on Cuba, and that any representation to the United States Government as to the injury which British trade would suffer in such a contingency would be “ill-timed.” Future events, however, proved that there was good ground for the apprehensions of the Chamber, and that, although the American tariff was not in fact imposed, the Cuban tariff was so modified in favour of the United States as to inflict serious injury on British commerce. Upon the Foreign Office reply being submitted to a merchant who was also a member of the Council of the Chamber, and who had had a lifelong experience of trade with Cuba, he said :—

“I am very far from resting assured that the danger

of preferential duties in Cuba has been averted, and I think it will still be imperative on the part of the Chamber to maintain a watchful attitude on this most important question. You will remember that we were once given the same assurance as regards Porto Rico, and that all of a sudden and unexpectedly we were saddled with a duty 80% higher than on American goods. Where is British trade to Porto Rico now? I expected no other reply, neither from the Foreign Office nor from His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington. My opinion is that we shall close the stable door when the steed is stolen."

And thus, unfortunately, it turned out, and the British exporter ultimately found himself very seriously handicapped indeed.

**Cheap Coal
Supplies.**

A memorial was addressed to the Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour) stating that the Chamber had had under consideration the question of the effect on the great industries of this country of the exhaustion of our available supplies of "relatively cheap coal." They had been informed that in some districts such supplies might be more or less completely exhausted within a short period of time, opinions being somewhat divided as to when this period might arrive. They urged, however, that it was manifest that the whole question was one of great importance to the industries of this country, and that the matter should be promptly and thoroughly investigated by a Royal Commission. As is now well known a Royal Commission was subsequently appointed, whose report did much to relieve the anxiety of traders and the general public—a result which more than justified the appointment, the inquiry and the expense involved.

**American
Trusts.**

About this time the commercial community of this country, who were interested in trade with the United States, were seriously concerned as to the possible effect of the growth and combination of American Trusts. The high level of the American tariff undoubtedly afforded an exceptional opportunity for the formation of such trusts which were in a position to secure big profits and at the same time effectively resist outside competition. A

Special General Meeting of the Chamber was held on the 5th June, 1901, to consider the matter, at which it was resolved :—

“That this Chamber considers the special and earnest attention of the Government should be given without delay to the best methods of guarding the interests of British trade and commerce against the injurious effects which may result from the combination of American Trusts both from a national and commercial aspect.”

In April, 1901, a communication was received from the Association of Chambers of Commerce stating that the Executive Council had reason to believe that, in view of the expiration in 1903 of the series of commercial treaties concluded by Germany in 1892 the German Government had in a view a full revision of their existing Customs Tariff, and that such revision might, in many instances, have the effect of considerably increasing the rates of customs' duty then leviable in Germany on many descriptions of goods in which the trade of this country was interested. As a result of this communication a memorial, signed by the whole of the pen manufacturers of Birmingham, was transmitted to the Foreign Secretary, in which it was stated that they were informed that the steel pen makers of Germany were endeavouring to obtain a very considerable increase in the import duties on English steel pens, and that the German Government in the then state of public opinion were not unfavourable to the suggested increase. It was pointed out that the duty already imposed was so high as to preclude competition in many kinds of pens, and that a still higher duty would practically shut out English pens from the German market entirely. In spite of the tariff limitations Germany was declared to be an important market for English steel pens, and it was added that if the agitation of the German makers should be successful the steel pen trade of Birmingham, which employed about 4,000 hands, would suffer to a very considerable extent. German pen makers already, it was stated, had an advantage by reason of a Ministerial decree prohibiting all German officials from using imported steel pens—a condition which, the

German
Tariff.

memorial alleged, was unfair in view of the fact that no goods of German origin were prohibited in English public offices. Seeing that the German makers were already well protected by the existing high tariff and the decree referred to, the "Birmingham Steel Pen Makers" jointly and severally protested "emphatically against the proposed increase" of duty, which they considered "unfair and unreasonable." They therefore entreated the Foreign Secretary's earnest consideration of the matter, and urged him to use his best "endeavour to prevent the imposition of the proposed increase."

In order to ascertain the views of the members of the Chamber on the proposed new German tariff, a circular-letter was issued in August, 1901, inviting their views. It cannot be said that the response to the invitation was satisfactory, but nevertheless very important information was obtained from firms of high repute. One firm stated that there was practically no trade with Germany in enamelled wrought-iron goods, and that, as regarded enamelled cast-iron goods, anything that was of a coarse or badly-finished nature was probably well adapted for home manufacture in Germany, and might be reserved for that purpose, but that it seemed unreasonable further to increase the duty on fine enamelled wares of cast-iron, as there was no home trade to be protected. Another firm manufacturing gas and electric fittings, etc., said they had no complaint to make as to the existing rates of duty, but were aggrieved at the capricious action of German Customs Officials in assessing their goods at one time under one classification and at another time under quite a different one, the duties varying in each case. Manufacturers of fish hooks, fishing tackle, needles, and needle cases, who sent large quantities of these goods to Germany, said that if the tariff were raised the trade would, to a large extent, be lost. Jewellers who exported precious stones set said that the proposed increase of duty from 600 marks to 6,000 marks per 100 kilos would practically extinguish the trade; and manufacturers of edge tools said that the prevailing duty had already, to a very large extent, excluded British goods, whilst the proposed new duties would in a very short time close the

market against importations from this country. In explanation of the apparent indifference of local manufacturers to the proposed increases of duty in Germany it might here be said that this was probably due to a want of knowledge as to the trend of events, and to the effect of the erstwhile supremacy of the British manufacturer—a supremacy which had, in fact, been for some time challenged and the overthrow of which was pending. It would not even now be correct to say that the supremacy of the British manufacturer has been overthrown, but it is, nevertheless, true that as a result of the careful “nursing” of industry by foreign countries, the position has been considerably changed.

In a memorial addressed to the Postmaster-General the Council said they had learned with regret and concern that a stupendous amount of labour had been expended upon the preparation of an international vocabulary for code telegrams, adding that they were of opinion that such a vocabulary would not only be useless for the purpose it was intended to serve, but, if it were made compulsory, would be very injurious alike to the interests of the Telegraph Companies and the users of code telegraphy everywhere. They expressed the opinion that the proposal to control the words that might be transmitted by means of a vocabulary of 650,000 words was impracticable, as it would necessitate a copy of the vocabulary being kept at every telegraph office in the world, and the time required by officials to consult “this immense mass of words” whenever code telegrams were presented for transmission would entail a vast and costly addition to the telegraph staff, and involve such delays as would make the service unworkable. It was therefore urged in the memorial that the work of framing an International Telegraph Code should be abandoned.

A memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary (the Marquis of Lansdowne, K.G.) calling his attention to the concession of territory in the French Congo, granted to about 44 Concessionaire Companies, and which concessions embraced nearly all the district of the “Congo Francaise.” The right conceded to the Companies, it was pointed out, included practically all the produce of the

Inter-
national
Vocabulary
for Code
Telegrams.

French
Congo.

French Congo, including wild animals. Certain lands, called the native reserves, were reserved for the natives, but independent traders were to be prevented from purchasing from the latter unless the produce purchased was collected in the reserves referred to. It was added that the effect of the concessions was to prevent independent traders from trading in the French Congo, because (1) the native reserves had not been delimited and until delimitation took place all produce was held to be the property of the Concessionaire Companies; (2) guarantees had, it was understood, been given to the Companies that rubber-producing land would not be included in the native reserves, and (3) cash was not in circulation in the French Congo district, and in order to obtain cash wherewith to pay for the goods imported by the independent trader the native must first sell his produce to the Concessionaire, who was not bound to pay in cash or to pay such a price as the native would readily receive under a fair competitive system of trade. The Chamber, therefore, protested against the Concessions, and urged His Majesty's Government to cause enquiry to be made into their legality, expressing in conclusion the hope that if the grant of concessions was found to be an infringement of the Berlin Act (1885) and the Brussels Act (1890), immediate steps would be taken to enforce the Acts referred to and to secure complete freedom of trade in the French Congo. A reply was received to the effect that the matter was forming the subject of correspondence with the French Government.

Modern Side
Grammar
School.

The Council had for a long time taken a keen interest in the development of modern education, and had done a great deal to cultivate public opinion. In their annual report for 1901 they had the satisfaction of reporting that a deputation from the Education Committee of the Chamber had been invited to meet the Head Master of the Grammar School, the Principal of the University, and representatives from the Birmingham and Midland Institute, with a view to discussing what steps might be taken to improve the condition of modern education in Birmingham. As a result of this interview the Grammar School Authorities decided that, whilst at the time they could not see their

way to single out one school for a purely modern side education, or to discontinue the teaching of Latin altogether—at all events in the lower forms—they were willing to take steps largely to extend and improve the teaching of modern languages in all their schools. French, it was stated, would be taught in every class in all schools, the time devoted to this language being for the future doubled. German would be taught in all the upper classes at all the grammar schools, and more time devoted to it than before. Boys who had acquired a fair knowledge of conversational French, and on arriving at the age of thirteen or thereabouts, would have the option of giving up Latin and substituting German, which would be taught in addition to French for a sufficient number of hours per week. The Council considered that, while these arrangements did not cover quite the whole of the ground desired, they were, no doubt, very important steps in the right direction.

At the meeting of the Council held on the 10th July, 1901, the Education Committee reported that they were glad to see from advertisements in the local Press that it had been definitely decided to institute a chair in commercial science at the University of Birmingham. It will be remembered that a strong proposal for such an institution had been made by the Chamber to the University two years previously, and that one or more interviews subsequently took place between duly accredited representatives of the University and the Chamber. Consequently it was particularly gratifying to the latter that the University Authorities adopted the suggestion. The Council of the University—no doubt with the fullest approval of the Chamber—decided not to constitute a Faculty of Commerce, or even to consider it until a first Professor of Commercial Science had been appointed, and had had an opportunity of spending some time—perhaps his first year—in studying the conditions of the locality; making himself personally acquainted with the manufacturers and men of business of the city; and as a result of the experience so gained originating and organising a curriculum, which would be likely in the long run to yield the best result. The Education Com-

Birmingham
University—
Faculty of
Commerce.

mittee of the Chamber were impressed with the importance of the problem to be solved—"a problem not yet (*i.e.*, in 1901) grasped in its entirety by any place in the world"—and whilst welcoming the decision of the University Authorities they consequently did not wish to do anything to hamper the University in the choice of the first Professor—desiring only that the best man from "every field of knowledge" associated with commerce in its widest form should be appointed. Thus Birmingham, largely, if not mainly, on the initiation of the Chamber of Commerce, became the first city in the world to establish a "Faculty of Commerce" in connection with a University; and the experience of over a decade has proved the wisdom and value of the experiment.

Railway
Passengers'
Luggage.

In 1900 the Chamber had called the attention of the London and North-Western, Midland, and Great Western Railway Companies to the inadequate protection by the Companies of properly-labelled passengers' luggage, and urged that they should assume a reasonable responsibility for its safe custody whilst in their charge. In 1901 an official reply was received, which was an indication of the growth of the practice of secret and binding arrangement and understanding between the Railway Companies. Not a single word was said by the Companies in regard to the serious allegations put forward in the communication from the Chamber, but they stated simply that whilst they were most anxious that every reasonable care should be exercised in the conveyance of passengers' luggage entrusted to them and their instructions and arrangements were framed with a view to that end, they were not prepared to take any liability beyond that which already devolved upon them. It is not for a moment to be supposed that this reply was satisfactory to the Chamber, and subsequent experience has proved that the Railway Companies intend to get all that they can out of the public, and give as little as they may in return for the charges levied by and paid to them.

State of
Trade.

The Council reported that the condition of trade at the opening of 1901 indicated that the "great prosperity" which was so marked a feature in 1899, and, to a large

extent in 1900, was passing away ; and in support of this called attention to the decreases in both imports and exports. They were, however, not unduly pessimistic, for they stated that in view of the fact that the war in South Africa had been in progress for over two years, and that its effect had undoubtedly been detrimental to the business of the country, the result of the year's trading could not be considered to be unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

1902.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 4th and 5th March, 1902, the Birmingham delegates were Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and Mr. R. P. Yates. No resolutions were moved by them at this meeting, and this was largely due to the fact that the Chamber was in a state of transition. The Secretary (Mr. W. F. Haydon), who had filled the office for over two decades, was afflicted with a serious illness, and the Council were greatly concerned in the perfection of their own organisation, which involved an enormous amount of work on the part of a Special Committee.

The Council, in their annual report, stated that the year 1902 had been a memorable one in the history of the Chamber, but expressed the hope that it would be the precursor of a career of extended usefulness in the interests of the manufactures, trade, and commerce of the city and the surrounding districts. In pursuance of the authority given to them at the previous Annual General Meeting, the Council had "entirely reorganised the Chamber." Their scheme of reorganisation had involved the retirement of their respected Secretary (Mr. W. F. Haydon), whose chief appointment was that of Secretary of the Birmingham Exchange, and the discontinuance of the partial occupancy of the Exchange premises, the use of

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Reorganisa-
tion of the
Chamber.

which had been granted to the Chamber at a nominal rent by the authorities of the Exchange. It had been decided (for the first time) that a Secretary should be appointed to devote the whole of his time to the duties of the office, and after careful consideration of numerous applications Mr. G. Henry Wright was appointed, and entered upon his duties on the 15th September. Convenient rooms at Winchester House, Victoria Square, were taken to serve as the home of the Chamber, and in reports submitted to the Council it was stated that the new offices contained "a splendid board-room" and a large office; and that the new Secretary had had a wide experience in a public office and was accustomed to dealing with subjects of a national and international character. From the minutes of their proceedings it is evident the Council were unanimously of opinion that they had adopted the proper course in taking a bold line and deciding that it was in the interests of the Chamber, and of the commercial community of Birmingham and district, that a whole-time Secretary should be appointed, and separate and distinct offices from those of the Exchange taken in order to enable the Council to increase the scope of the operations of the Chamber. In their annual report the Council said they were of opinion that the future prospects of the Chamber were exceedingly bright. With its own offices and a Secretary devoting his whole time to the work they thought that, by the aid of a larger number of Committees—involving an increased number of meetings—they would be able to deal more thoroughly with special subjects which continually presented themselves, and by the formation of trade sections "in course of time" be enabled to increase the scope of the operations of the Chamber. The arrangements originated by the Committee of the Chamber were adopted, and steps at once taken to carry them out or make them more complete. It was stated that "if the manufacturers, merchants, and traders of this great industrial and mercantile city and the busy trading towns of the district" would, in their own interests, loyally support the Chamber by becoming members, it would "quickly reach the position it ought to occupy as

representing the manufacturing and mercantile interests of the fifth largest city in the Empire," and the surrounding towns of Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Smethwick, Oldbury, Cradley Heath, Redditch, and other towns in the neighbourhood which had no Chamber of Commerce of their own. The Council added that they were convinced that Chambers of Commerce were absolutely essential to the welfare of the trade and commerce of the country, and they therefore urged that the members, individually and collectively, should do their utmost to secure new members.

Shortly after the new Secretary entered upon his duties he suggested the publication by the Chamber of a Monthly Journal. Monthly Journal for the purpose of giving information of value and use for members, and keeping members in close touch with the work performed by the Council. After careful consideration the suggestion was adopted, and the first number appeared on the 31st January, 1903. The Council expressed their conviction that the publication of the Journal was a step in the right direction, and felt sure that it would prove to be of considerable service. From January, 1903, the Journal has been published every month with so much success that its continuance is assured. It is worthy of note that the Journal contains every month thirty-two columns, containing, in the whole, nearly 20,000 words, and that it is the only publication in existence which has a complete record of the proceedings of the Council of any Chamber. In every way the issue of the first number of the Journal was welcomed generally by the business classes.

A series of complaints against the action of the General Commissioners for Income Tax and against the methods generally in force in making assessments to the tax was brought before the Council with a view to some steps being taken to secure an amendment of the law. The matter was referred to a Special Committee, consisting of Messrs. Arthur Chamberlain, J.P., (Chairman), Eric M. Carter, H. C. Field, J.P., and R. A. Pinsent, who were empowered to inquire what grounds of complaint existed both in relation to the law as it then stood and to its administration, and to consider and report what Income Tax Assignments and Appeals.

amendments or alterations of the law appeared to be desirable. On the 17th September the Committee submitted an interim report which contained a recommendation that the Secretary should be empowered to issue to the members of the Chamber a circular inviting them to state in writing any facts within their own knowledge bearing on the points in question. In the month of October the particular complaint which had caused the matter to be raised was settled by the Board of Inland Revenue, acting through the General Commissioners. The Board decided to waive the point to which objection had been taken. Consequently the work of the Committee was afterwards confined to assessments under Schedule D. In their annual report the Council said they were shortly expecting a report. The question, they added, was one of great importance, and they trusted their efforts in the matter would be the means of securing such an amendment of the law, or of the practice, as would be beneficial to members in particular and to the manufacturing and trading classes of the community in general.

Railway
Rates—
Owners'
Risk.

On September 3rd, 1902, a deputation from the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce waited upon the Council to urge that some steps should be taken by the local Chambers of Commerce with reference to the action of the Railway Companies in requiring a formal agreement to be signed by traders consigning goods at owners' risk rates. The effect of the agreement was to relieve the Companies from all liability for loss, damage, or delay, except upon proof of wilful misconduct on the part of the Railway Companies or their servants. The representations of the Wolverhampton Chamber having been considered the Council decided to convene a Conference of the Chambers of Commerce of Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Kidderminster, and Worcester. This conference was held on the 8th October, under the presidency of the Chairman of the Birmingham Chamber (Mr. F. B. Goodman, J.P.), and Birmingham was also represented by Messrs. Arthur Chamberlain, J.P., H. W. Edmunds, E. C. Keay, Councillor L. J. Murray, E. Parkes, M.P., D. W. Probert, and the Secretary. A long discussion took place as to the action which should

be taken, and eventually a Committee was appointed to interview the District Goods Managers. Pending the result of the negotiations, however, the conference, having regard to the real seriousness of the matters, took a very bold (yet necessary) step and advised traders "not to sign the formal agreement" referred to. Before the interview with the District Goods Managers took place the Railway Companies issued a joint circular to traders referring to their practice, when forwarding goods to be charged at the reduced owners' risk rates, of not using the standard form of consignment note, and to their not having signed the general owners' risk agreement, and notifying that in future the respective phrases: "owner's risk," "undamageable," or their equivalents appearing on the trader's consignment notes, would be regarded as intending to refer to the Railway Companies standard conditions. On the 26th November, 1902, the interview took place with the District Goods Managers, who stated that the joint circular previously mentioned must be construed as in no way withdrawing or modifying the conditions upon which the Companies carried goods at owners' risk rates. It was pointed out, however, by the District Goods Managers that "whilst the Companies would maintain the protection given to them by the conditions, they would not in the future, any more than in the past, refuse to consider claims on their merits." In parenthesis, it may here be stated that the words quoted above were approved by the Railway Companies' representatives, but it may safely be added that never since the words were agreed to have owners' risk claims been considered on their merits—the invariable result of the great majority of all reasonable claims being their summary rejection on the ground of owner's risk. Nevertheless, having regard to the very definite promise of fair consideration the Committee appointed by the Conference recommended the various Chambers "to advise traders to take no action, but to wait and ascertain by experience, during a period of three or four months, whether as a matter of fact the joint circular would be used to injure unfairly the position of traders consigning goods at reduced rates at owner's risk."

No further developments took place in 1902, but it may well be pointed out in this chapter that the vigorous action taken by the Chamber was very cordially welcomed by the commercial community as being a distinct step in the right direction.

Postal Rates
to Canada.

On October 22nd, 1902, the Council made a strong representation to the Postmaster-General with reference to the great discrepancy then existing in the rates of postage for newspapers, magazines, and periodicals as between the United States and Canada and between England and Canada to the great detriment of the commercial relations between the latter countries. Whilst the publications referred to, when despatched by the publishers from the office of publication or by newsagents to their regular subscribers, could be sent from the United States for 1 cent per lb. weighed in bulk, and when despatched by other than publishers at the rate of 1 cent per 4oz. or 2d. per lb. weighed in bulk, the rate from this country to Canada was $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 2oz. or 4d. per lb., with a weight limit of 4lbs. It was also pointed out that the Canadian people were unable to purchase British newspapers, magazines, and periodicals because of the cost being excessively increased by the heavy postal rates, whilst the rate from the United States was so low that the charge for American publications was only increased very slightly thereby. As British publications did not circulate freely in Canada, the Council asserted, on excellent authority, that the Canadian people were ignorant of the affairs of Great Britain and the British Empire, but were exceedingly well-informed in connection with the affairs of the United States, because the Dominion was flooded with their publications. Moreover, it was said, advertisements appearing in British publications were rarely or never seen by the Canadian people, whilst advertisements of American goods, which were so lavishly displayed in American publications, became household words to the serious loss to the British manufacturer of the sales of his various lines of goods which were not asked for by the reading public of Canada because they knew only of similar lines of goods manufactured in the United States.

Having regard to these vital facts the Postmaster-General was urged to take steps to bring about a reduction in the postal rate for newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, sent from England to Canada.

In his reply the Postmaster-General said that the England-to-Canada rates were the lowest which prevailed between the United Kingdom and any other portion of his Majesty's Dominions, and that the exceptional rates between the United States and Canada were made by special arrangement between the two administrations. A further letter was sent to the Postmaster-General pointing out that whereas the United States administration deemed it expedient to arrange an exceedingly low postal rate to Canada on the publications referred to, which, besides their great value as a means of organising public opinion on questions of political and commercial importance were also vast advertising media, it still maintained the rate for letters and sealed matter at the comparatively high rate of 2 cents per oz. The only possible reason for this great discrepancy, the Council thought, was that in return for the low special rate on newspapers, magazines, and periodicals the United States Government and people must receive more than compensating political and commercial advantages. In a further letter the Postmaster-General questioned the inference drawn by the Chamber from the conspicuous difference between the American postal rates for letters and the rate for printed papers, but stated that the matter would receive his most careful consideration. It is significant that within a few years another Postmaster-General realised that the matter was worthy not only of consideration but also of action and approximated the English rates to those of the United States—a reform which was cordially welcomed on this side and which has undoubtedly produced substantial benefits for the Mother Country and also for English settlers in Canada.

On the 11th March, 1902, a joint deputation from the Birmingham and other Chambers of Commerce waited upon Lord Lansdowne (His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) to urge upon him the

British
Trade with
Cuba.

necessity for the strongest possible representations to be made to the Government of the United States, with the object of securing the maintenance of the then existing rights of trading with Cuba and in the event of a Reciprocity Treaty being concluded between the United States and Cuba, of obtaining for Great Britain and other Colonies and Dependencies the right to "most favoured nation treatment in matters of trade and commerce." Mr. Th. W. Petersen represented the Chamber on the deputation, to whom the Foreign Secretary replied that, whilst any official approach to the United States Government might do more harm than good, he was fully in sympathy with the deputation, and would do all in his power to further their request. In order, however, to bring the matter into practical shape he suggested that the United Chambers of Commerce should send him a memorandum explaining how, in their opinion, the Government could take practical steps in the direction mentioned. This memorandum was duly prepared by the Liverpool Chamber, who had organised the deputation, and a further letter was addressed to Lord Landsowne, urging him to intervene in the interests of British trade. On December 11th, 1902, the Plenipotentiaries of Cuba and the United States signed a new Commercial Reciprocity Treaty, which granted preferential treatment of a far-reaching nature to the United States. At the close of the year the Treaty had not been ratified, and further representations of the strongest possible kind were addressed to the Foreign Secretary, urging him to take immediate steps to secure most favoured nation treatment, and pointing out that if the Treaty were ratified as drawn it would result in the infliction of serious financial injury upon the Birmingham manufacturer and merchant in particular, and upon the manufacturing and shipping community in general. As we now know, the Foreign Office was quite impotent in the matter, and the Treaty was duly ratified and came into force.

French
Congo.

The arbitrary action of the French Government in granting monopoly concessions to French traders in the region of the French Congo, to the great injury of British trade, was considered by the Council on several occasions,

and on the 16th May, 1902, a memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary urging that the signatories to the Berlin Act of 1885 should re-assemble to consider and decide whether in their opinion the action of the French Government was an infringement of the provisions of the Berlin Act, and that, if it were, immediate steps should be taken to enforce the provisions of the Act in order to secure complete freedom of trade. A further representation was also made to the Foreign Secretary urging him to receive a deputation on the subject, and at the close of the year it was decided to bring the matter before the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

In 1902 Mr. Chamberlain, then his Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, decided to make a visit to South Africa, which had been the scene of a prolonged and costly war, and the Council unanimously passed a resolution recording its gratification at the decision, which would enable the Colonial Secretary to examine on the spot the problems presented, and expressing the view that Mr. Chamberlain's visit would be productive of the greatest benefit to British trade, and would do much to strengthen and confirm the Imperial ties which then existed between them and the daughter States of the Empire.

The Council passed a resolution to the effect that in their opinion it was most desirable, in the interests of education and commerce that the Metric System of Weights and Measures should be made compulsory throughout the British Empire after the lapse of such time as might be necessary for preparing for the change. A copy of this resolution was sent to the Board of Trade and to the local members of Parliament.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

1903.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

French
Congo.

The Chamber was represented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th March, 1903, by Mr. F. B. Goodman, Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. J. W. Tonks, Mr. R. P. Yates, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary). Birmingham and Liverpool had resolutions on the official programme, dealing with the French Congo, and by agreement with Liverpool, Mr. Yates moved the following resolution :—

“That having regard to the present position of English traders in the French Congo, this Association trusts that the negotiations which are now pending between the Foreign Office and the French Government in reference to trading concessions in that region may be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in the interests of British trade and commerce ; and that a copy of this resolution be communicated to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.”

The resolution was carried.

Reorganisa-
tion and
Incorporation.

The Chamber during this year proceeded very rapidly with the work of reorganisation, and by dint of much perseverance the number of members was increased from 264 to 390, being a net increase of 126. With the view of improving its position the Council also procured the incorporation of the Chamber under the Companies' Acts (1862–1900) on the 6th October, 1902, thus converting it into a corporate body, with an independent legal status, perpetual succession and powers to act by means of a common seal. Under the Memorandum of Association extensive powers were taken with the view of enabling the Chamber as its income increased to enlarge the scope of its operations, and to extend its usefulness to the manufacturing and mercantile classes of the city and district.

The Monthly
Journal.

In their annual report the Council stated that the opinion they had previously expressed with reference to the

service which would be rendered by the Journal had been confirmed. There was little doubt, they said, that it had adequately fulfilled the purpose for which its publication was undertaken. It had provided a much-needed medium for the periodical circulation of the proceedings of the Council and for the dissemination of much valuable commercial information.

The Fifth Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire was held in Montreal, Canada, on the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th August, 1903, when the Chamber was represented by Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., who, on their behalf, took a very active and important part in the proceedings. In the name of the Chamber he moved two resolutions, which were carried, viz. :—

(1) A resolution calling attention to one passed at the Colonial Conference of 1902, as to the advisability of the Metric System of Weights and Measures being adopted for use within the Empire, and urging the adoption of legislative measures for bringing about the necessary reform.

(2) A resolution calling attention to one passed at the Colonial Conference of 1902 in favour of the adoption of the principle of Cheap Postage between the different parts of the Empire on all newspapers and periodicals, and urging that the principle outlined be adopted, and especially that immediate steps should be taken to establish reciprocal postal rates between the United Kingdom and Canada for the exchange of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals in bulk, so as to counteract the effect of the low bulk rate for such publications proceeding to Canada from the United States.

Petitions were lodged in Parliament in favour of the Rating of Machinery Bill, the Hall Marking of Foreign Plate Bill, the Local Government Franchise and Representation (Extension to Companies) Bill, and the County Courts Jurisdiction Extension Bill. Mainly through the operations of the Chambers of Commerce the last-named Bill became law, but the exigencies of Parliamentary time intervened to prevent progress being made with the others. Petitions were also presented to

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

Metric
System.

Inter-
Imperial
Postal Rates.

Commercial
Legislation.

Parliament praying for the rejection of two Bills for amending the law with reference to Trade Disputes, their object being to legalise picketing in a most objectionable form. Letters were also addressed to the local members of Parliament urging them to vote against these two Bills, one of which was rejected at the second reading stage, and the other subsequently withdrawn. A large number of other Bills was also considered, so that action might be taken if necessary.

Registration
of Designs in
Germany.

A letter was addressed to the Foreign Secretary, calling his attention to the hardship inflicted on British manufacturers in the matter of the registration of designs or ornamental patterns in Germany, and urging him to make representations to the Government with the view of removing such hardship. It was pointed out that whilst registrations were accepted by the German authorities they possessed no validity or effectiveness unless the goods were actually made in Germany. The Council suggested that His Majesty's Government should endeavour to negotiate a convention with Germany on the basis of reciprocal treatment, so that a British manufacturer might have the same protection in Germany for his designs, etc., as the German manufacturer already enjoyed in this country. It will be seen in a subsequent chapter that the Chamber afterwards recommended to the Government that compulsory working of designs should be established here, one of the reasons for this being that the British Government would then be in a stronger position to negotiate for a Reciprocity Convention, and, failing this, would be treating the German manufacturer in the same way as the German authorities treated ours, and, as is now well-known, a provision to the desired effect was inserted in the Patents and Designs Act of 1906.

Trade with
Cuba.

A long communication was addressed to the Foreign Secretary, calling his attention to the memorial presented to him in 1901, referred to in a previous chapter, on the subject of the Reciprocity Treaty between Cuba and the United States, and giving minute details as to the differential duties on a wide range of articles exported from the Birmingham district. The Council expressed the

view that if ratified in its then form the Treaty would result in the infliction of serious financial injury on merchants and manufacturers in Birmingham, and upon the manufacturers and the shipping community of Great Britain, and might, moreover, have the effect of practically destroying British trade with Cuba. They therefore urged that his Majesty's Government should take immediate steps to protest against the ratification of the Treaty in the form in which it then stood, and to secure "most favoured nation" treatment for the United Kingdom. The reply of the Foreign Office was that the Treaty had been signed; that the United States Government had replied that they based their right to sign it on the "prerogative of independent nations to enter into such compacts for their mutual benefit"; and that, in these circumstances, the Government could not usefully take any further action in the matter. Thus, owing to our impotence in international trade affairs, the British exporter had to see the door of yet another market partly closed against him, and to do what he had previously done in a number of similar cases—turn his energies into another direction.

The Council adopted a very important report prepared Income Tax. by the Special Committee appointed by them, and presided over by Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, with reference to the more serious complaints of those paying Income Tax under Schedule D. The Committee stated that the tax was higher than it need be because the Commissioners allowed of its evasion in a large number of cases by avoidance of return. In some districts in the previous year more than one-fourth of those liable never made any return at all, and it was estimated that the amount of the tax paid was 3d. or 4d. in the £ more than it might have been if every one had paid in accordance with the law. There was no appeal on matters of fact from the decision of the General Commissioners, though there was one from the Special Commissioners, and this the Committee considered should be remedied. A private person or firm had no right to be represented before the Commissioners, which was regarded as an injustice, in view of the complexity of modern business accounts

and of the income tax procedure. In certain cases an appellant was not allowed to choose which body of Commissioners he would go before, but was compelled to go to the General Commissioners. The Committee were of opinion that he should have a free choice, and that the powers of the Special and General Commissioners should be made co-extensive for that purpose. The Committee also asserted that the practice of the Commissioners in regard to depreciation of machinery and wasting assets was not in accordance with reason or justice, and it was suggested that in Section 12 of the Customs and Inland Revenue Act (1878) the words "by reason of wear and tear" should be omitted, and the word "buildings" inserted after "machinery and plant." In regard to the latter important point the Committee pointed out that the nature of manufacturing business had completely changed during recent years; that in times past—before increasing competition had introduced new elements—apparatus and machinery were kept in use till they dropped to pieces and a moderate depreciation out of profits met the case; but that the best modern practice often led the wise manufacturer to consider processes and machinery obsolete after only a few years' use. In concluding their report the Committee advocated the appointment of a Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into and report upon the operation of Income Tax, and shortly afterwards such a Committee was appointed. It might be added here that although the Chamber may never be satisfied with the administration of Income Tax, many of its suggestions have from time to time been adopted. Improvements have been effected in several of the points referred to in the report above referred to, a complete copy of which was annexed to a memorial presented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer immediately after its adoption.

Railway
Rates and
Conditions.

On the 28th May an important conference of local Chambers of Commerce was convened by the Council to consider various questions relating to Railway Rates and Conditions. The Chambers represented were Birmingham, Dudley, Kidderminster, North Staffordshire, Walsall, Wolverhampton, and Worcester, the Birmingham

Chamber being represented by Mr. F. B. Goodman (who presided), Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, Mr. W. G. Hills, Mr. D. W. Probert, and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright). At the opening of the Meeting it was resolved unanimously that in view of the fact that the interests of the various trade districts represented were to a great extent identical, a Standing Joint Committee, consisting of two members of each Chamber, be appointed to deal with any general question concerning Railway rates and the conditions imposed on traders by the Railway Companies. The resolution was enthusiastically adopted by the various Chambers, and a Standing Joint Committee, with power to add to its number other Chambers, and with headquarters in Birmingham (the Secretary of the Chamber being appointed Secretary), was constituted, and was subsequently described as "a distinct forward move," marking "a new development in the history of local Chambers of Commerce." Two meetings of the Committee were held during the year, and a considerable number of subjects dealt with in the interests of the mercantile and manufacturing community, the principal question being that of owners' risk conditions. Traders were advised to press all reasonable claims, and if they failed to secure proper treatment to furnish their respective Chambers with full particulars, so that, if necessary, joint action should be taken in communication with the Railway Companies, who, in the previous year, had definitely stated that the Companies "would not in the future, any more than in the past, refuse to consider claims on their merits." In addition to their work in connection with the Standing Joint Committee, the Council of the Chamber also made direct representation to the Railway Companies with regard to a number of matters which had come under their consideration, and it was generally agreed by the commercial community that new life had been infused into the operations of the Chamber in this regard—to the great advantage of the trading classes.

Roumanian
Customs
Tariff.

A memorial was presented to the Foreign Secretary, stating that it was understood the Roumanian Government was engaged in formulating a new Customs Tariff, and that there was a probability that this would impose on British goods a higher scale of duties than that existing. It was added that the German, Italian, and Austrian Governments were specially represented at Bucharest, and were in close touch with the Roumanian Finance Minister with the view of protecting the commercial interests of their respective countries, whilst, notwithstanding the fact that our exports were valued at £1,250,000 per annum a considerable proportion of which went from the Birmingham and Midland district, we were not so represented at Bucharest. The Council, therefore, urged that a special and competent Commercial Attaché should be appointed to proceed to Bucharest for the purpose of supporting the interests of the United Kingdom, and that information as to the probable changes in the Tariff should be communicated, at the earliest possible moment, to the Chamber of Commerce so that they might have an opportunity of considering the same and expressing their views thereupon. The Commercial Attaché to his Majesty's Embassy at Constantinople was subsequently instructed to proceed to Bucharest, and, at the request of the Foreign Office, the Chamber forwarded detailed statements of goods, the export of which to Roumania it was desired should be protected as far as possible.

Austro-
Hungarian
and Russian
Customs
Tariffs.

At the request of the Board of Trade reports were forwarded to them as to the probable effect of the proposed new Austro-Hungarian and Russian Customs Tariffs. In regard to the latter it was said that existing high duties had seriously restricted British exports in a considerable number of articles which were specified; that a careful study of the new Tariff revealed the fact that it was proposed very considerably to increase these duties; that local merchants and manufacturers viewed these increases with much concern because their effect would be to shut British goods out of the Russian markets in all cases where similar goods could be produced in Russia; and that they, therefore, hoped his Majesty's Government would use their best endeavours to secure considerable

reductions. In regard to Austria-Hungary it was said the district was not so largely interested as the existing tariff gave the home producers a "powerful protection" against which it was almost impossible for us to compete; and that the proposed increased duty would practically destroy such trade as was carried on from this country.

On the 15th May, 1903, the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, as Colonial Secretary, made his famous pronouncement on the subject of preferential trading relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies. The Council at once—and before the subject became one of acute party politics—instructed the Tariff Committee to report on the proposals. This Committee proceeded at once with its task, and at the outset made careful and exhaustive enquiries of the members of the Chamber with the view of ascertaining whether a system of preferential tariffs would or would not be likely to promote the trade and commerce of the United Kingdom with the Colonies without inflicting serious injury on any portion of our foreign trade. Within three months a voluminous report was submitted in pamphlet form for the consideration of the Chamber—a report which was many times afterwards described in the Press and elsewhere as constituting an absolutely fair and impartial statement of the facts and conditions relating to British trade with foreign countries and British Colonies, and of the arguments for and against a system of Inter-Imperial Preferential Tariffs. In a preliminary paragraph the Committee stated that throughout their investigations and discussions they had consistently endeavoured to treat the subject from a strictly commercial (*i.e.*, as distinguished from a political) point of view; and that they fully agreed with the general principle of taking all practical steps to stimulate and facilitate mutual commercial intercourse between the United Kingdom and his Majesty's Dominions beyond the Seas, and were of opinion that any conjoint action, which would promote the development of the vast resources of the Empire, and assist the growth of Inter-Imperial trade and commerce on terms of reciprocal advantage, would not only strengthen the existing bonds of union, but would favourably affect the economic and

Inter-
Imperial
Trade.

commercial welfare of the Empire as a whole. The replies received from members of the Chamber were carefully analysed in the report, and this analysis was followed by a close examination of the statistics of British trade between 1880 and 1902, a period of over 22 years. In a later paragraph the Committee said :—

“ Your Committee is of opinion that it will be generally recognised that the statistics which have been presented prove that the exports (excluding coal) of the United Kingdom to foreign countries are on the decline, and that the only growing markets for British manufactures are the Colonies and Dependencies of the Empire. For many years to come the prosperity of our Colonies must depend upon the development of their agricultural and mineral resources, and during the development of these resources they are likely to draw more and more upon older countries for their supplies of manufactured articles. The manufacturing capacity of foreign countries is rapidly increasing ; their markets are being gradually closed to British goods by the imposition of hostile tariffs ; and there are no substantial grounds for anticipating that these hostile tariffs will be voluntarily diminished in our favour. Your Committee is, therefore, of opinion that the cultivation of closer trade relations between the Mother Country and the rest of the Empire is a matter of the greatest importance to the United Kingdom.”

After considering the whole of the evidence and statistics laid before it, the Committee recommended that the following resolutions should be submitted at an early date to a General Meeting of the Chamber, viz. :—

“(1) That this Chamber is prepared to support the imposition of moderate customs duties on such of the products (excluding raw materials) and manufactures of foreign countries as are the principal products imported from British possessions beyond the seas, with a view of a preference being given to the products and manufactures of the Colonies and Dependencies of the British Empire, on condition that such

a preference be granted by the Colonies in return on the products and manufactures of the United Kingdom as will adequately compensate the Mother Country."

- "(2) That the Chamber fully approves the principle that the Colonial Governments should be secured in their freedom to enter into such fiscal relations with the Imperial Government as may be mutually agreed upon without detriment to their fiscal relations with foreign powers."

At a General Meeting of the Chamber, held on the 23rd September, 1903, these resolutions were adopted by an overwhelming majority, after a debate which was conducted on the most impartial business lines—a procedure which was possible then when the subject was not regarded so strongly from a purely party standpoint. Since that time the matter has unfortunately drifted into the vortex of party politics, and, as such, is excluded from discussion by the Articles of Association of the Chamber, which is, of course, and must always be, a non-party body, in order to enable it to exercise, in the many other important commercial problems that arise, the necessary influence on the Government of the day.

In September, 1903, a question of the Registration of Trade Marks, which appeared to involve a matter of important principle, was taken up by the Council. A Birmingham firm applied for the registration of a trade mark, which consisted of a label for use on bottles bearing a combination of devices together with certain wording. They were prepared to disclaim formally the right to the exclusive use of the words, except so far as they consisted of their own name. After considering the application the Comptroller asked whether the applicants were prepared to remove the letterpress from the representation of the proposed mark. Their reply was that they were not prepared to do so, and there was no reason why they should do, the wording on the labels being simply to the effect that the contents of the applicant's bottles bearing the label were genuine. It was, therefore, intimated to them that the application could not be further considered. A hearing was immediately applied for and obtained, and

Registration
of Trade
Marks.

the applicant's agents were then informed that under certain circumstances the wording would not be true—the argument being the astounding one that if the label got washed off or removed from one of the bottles the contents would still be genuine. The Chamber made several strong representations with regard to the arbitrary attitude assumed by the Registrar, but the application to register was nevertheless ultimately refused. An opinion was, therefore, expressed that even-handed justice could only be secured by an amendment of the law. The trading interests of applicants were entirely at the mercy of an individual who was given quasi-judicial authority, accompanied by absolute discretion to grant or refuse an application. There was nothing in the law to compel him to register a mark, and he might even refuse if the application was in strict conformity with the law. It was necessary, therefore, the Chamber argued, that his discretion should be considerably restricted, and that an applicant should be entitled to registration without having to go to Court if an application complied with the conditions set forth in the Act.

Other
Subjects.

Many other subjects than those dealt with in the preceding paragraphs were considered during the year, and suitable action taken thereupon in the interests of trade and industry. These included the Venezuelan Surtax on imports from Trinidad, the new Brazilian Custom Regulations concerning Consular Invoices, the Excessive Rates charged on the Beira and Mashonaland Railway, the Preference given by New Zealand Steamship Lines to Continental Freight, and the Trading Licence Tax on Incorporated Companies carrying on business in New Zealand and South Africa—all very important matters affecting the traders of the country.

CHAPTER LXXV.

1904.

Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary) represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held at London on the 8th, 9th, and 10th March, 1904, and at the Autumnal Meeting held in Manchester on the 28th and 29th September, 1904, the delegates were Messrs. J. S. Taylor, F. B. Goodman, H. W. Edmunds, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Mr. G. Henry Wright, at this meeting, moved a resolution to the effect that the trading interests of Great Britain were injuriously affected by the discrepancy between the Railway Rates for the carriage of goods from foreign towns to the sea and the rates charged by Railway Companies in this country, and that this injury was increased by the advantage given by our Railway Companies to foreign producers for the conveyance of goods from the outports to the great centres of distribution than were available to our traders from the seats of home production. It was, therefore, suggested that the President of the Board of Trade should be asked to receive a deputation to urge upon him the desirability of a Select Committee being appointed to inquire into the question and to recommend some means for removing the grievance either by a readjustment of the Railway Rates or by the development of our canals, or by both. There have been so many unconsidered statements made from time to time as to preferential Railway rates that it is desirable to say here that the Chamber did not allege that there was any undue preference within the meaning of the law. If, for instance, there was a difference in the rate from Northampton to London as compared with the rate from London to Northampton on hardware, that would be an "undue preference" from the legal point of view. This was not the allegation at all. What the Chamber said in effect was that the rate per ton per mile from London to

Railway
Rates.

Northampton was less than the rate per ton per mile from Birmingham to Northampton, Birmingham being the centre of the home hardware trade. Consequently the expression "advantage" was used in the resolution. Many instances of the kind mentioned were adduced in support of the resolution, which was carried after slight discussion.

Postal Rates
to Canada.

Mr. Wright at the same meeting also moved that a memorial be addressed to his Majesty's Postmaster-General, calling his attention to the resolution passed at the previous Annual Meeting, with reference to the rate of postage on magazines, newspapers, and periodicals despatched from the United Kingdom to Canada, and urging upon him the necessity (in the interests of British trade and commerce) of taking special steps to assimilate such rate with the low bulk rate at that time in operation between the United States and Canada—periodicals, etc., then being mailed from the United States to Canada in bulk at a half-cent per lb., whereas the rate from the United Kingdom to Canada was 8 cents (4d.) per lb., with a weight limit of 5lbs. The facts in support of this resolution, which was carried, have been given in a previous chapter.

Company
Licences in
Cape Colony
and Natal.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association Mr. J. S. Taylor moved that in the opinion of the Association the then existing system of levying trade licence taxes in Cape Colony and Natal on the capital of companies incorporated in the United Kingdom constituted an injustice to such Companies, and that a memorial be presented to the Colonial Secretary requesting him to receive a deputation to urge upon him the desirability of some steps being taken with the view of inducing the Governments of the said Colonies to initiate legislation for the purpose of removing the cause of grievance. After giving many facts in support of the resolution Mr. Taylor mentioned a Company of which he was a Director which was called upon to pay in Cape Colony alone an annual tax of 1/- per £100 on its paid-up capital of £180,000, whilst one-sixth only of that capital was used in the Colony. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. Goodman, on behalf of the Chamber, at the same meeting, moved that the Executive Council of the Association be requested to consider and report upon the best means of improving the financial position, status and influence of the Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom ; and that their report be circulated among the Chambers of Commerce with the official programme for the next Annual Meeting, and submitted to the said meeting for adoption or otherwise. The resolution was carried unanimously, and a Sub-Committee of the Association was subsequently appointed, consisting of Messrs. W. F. Beardshaw, J.P., Mr. A. F. Firth, J.P., Col. T. W. Harding, J.P., E. Parkes, M.P., Felix Schuster, B. F. Stiebel, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber), who, at a future meeting, presented a report to the Association which, whilst it did not concede all the points urged by the Chamber, put forward a number of reasons which will be apparent to all readers of this work why Chambers of Commerce should be supported by all who are interested directly or indirectly in trade. It is undoubted that by their action in this matter the Chamber did much to improve the position, and the time may yet come when the country will be fully seized of the desirability of Chambers of Commerce being vested with an official status and maintained out of public moneys as are those of Germany, France, and other important industrial and commercial countries. Limitations of space in the present work make it impossible to go into detail, but it must be obvious to everyone that the Government would be greatly strengthened if the Chambers of Commerce were re constituted on the lines of those of some other countries, where they have a sort of statutory connection with the Ministry of Commerce.

An important communication was addressed to the Colonial Secretary calling his attention to the burden placed on companies incorporated in this country and carrying on business in New Zealand, Cape Colony, and Natal. The Council said that whilst fully appreciating the desire which had been shown by these Colonies to encourage by means of a Preferential Tariff the development of trade with the United Kingdom, they could not

Status of
Chambers of
Commerce.

Colonial
Trade
Licence
Taxes.

but feel that the policy of levying duties on the whole of the capital of a company which employed only a portion of it in connection with its business in any one Colony, was a great and needless hindrance to companies incorporated in the United Kingdom. They also expressed the opinion that the subject of direct taxes on United Kingdom Companies trading with British Colonies was one which might reasonably form the subject of negotiations with a view to the conditions in the various Colonies being assimilated, if possible, but, in any case, made less burdensome. It was pointed out that the British law imposed no such restrictions on Colonial Companies.

**Railway
Questions.**

Many Railway matters of great importance were considered during 1904, and vigorous action was taken in quite a large number of cases, with the view of protecting the interests of the commercial community. The Standing Joint Committee of Midland Chambers of Commerce, which was formed on the initiation of the Birmingham Chamber, and the headquarters of which were at Birmingham—the Secretary to the Committee being the Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber—continued its useful work with regard to “owners’ risk conditions,” and the Council, in their annual report, stated that they believed a firm continuance of the policy adopted by that Committee would ultimately be productive of considerable benefit to the whole body of traders. About the middle of the year the Council issued a circular to members suggesting the constitution of a Railway Department to be placed under the control of an expert, but, unfortunately, the response was not such as to justify the Council in authorising the formation of such a department at that time. Since that period another effort has been made, and about two-thirds of a guarantee fund of one thousand pounds has been promised, and it is hoped that before or, at any rate, shortly after the publication of this volume, a Railway Department will have been successfully established. As in all voluntary associations developments can only be made by slow degrees, but it is undeniable that efficient development in the direction indicated would more than justify itself in a very short space of time.

Towards the close of 1904 the Council, as a result of their investigations, became aware of the widespread practice on the part of many traders, and especially of importers of foreign produce, of misdeclaring their consignments with the view of obtaining lower rates than those properly chargeable. Representations were made to the Railway Companies on the subject, and these were, on request being made, supported by other Chambers of Commerce, including those of London, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, and Wolverhampton. The Council of the Birmingham Chamber, however, before seeking the support of other Chambers, had an interview with the local District Goods' Managers of the three Railway Companies, whose attention they distinctly called to the injury inflicted on honest traders by the widespread existence of the objectionable and dishonest practice referred to. It appeared that up to the date of the interview only the London and North-Western Railway Company had taken any decisive steps with the view of putting a stop to the practice, but at the interview the representatives of the other Companies gave a definite assurance that they proposed to act in conjunction with the other Companies. There can be no doubt that in this important matter the action taken by the Birmingham Chamber has done much to reduce the amount of misdeclaration of traffic, and thus to secure appreciable benefits to local traders who obtained a virtual assurance that their more unscrupulous competitors—whether home or foreign—should not obtain any undue advantage over them.

On the 1st March, 1904, a letter was addressed to the Colonial Secretary (The Rt. Hon. Alfred Lyttleton, K.C., M.P.), calling his attention to the objection of the Chamber to the practice of levying customs duty on such articles as trade catalogues and price-lists, which had no saleable value, when they were forwarded to various self-governing Colonies. The Council urged that as such duty could not constitute any considerable source of revenue, and as it was an irritant and needlessly restrictive of trade, it should be abolished. A somewhat voluminous correspondence followed in the course of

Misdeclara-
tion of
Railway
Traffic.

Customs
Duties on
Trade
Catalogues.

which the Council did not deviate, but, if anything, emphasized, their root objection to the imposition of duties on trade information; and it may here be said that, although the duties referred to have not been abolished, the Colonial Governments concerned have in most cases made fairly appropriate arrangements for facilitating the payment of duty at this end.

Swiss
Customs
Tariff.

At their April meeting in 1904 the Council adopted an exhaustive report of the Tariff Committee on the proposed new General Customs Tariff of Switzerland, from which it appears that in regard to goods in which the Birmingham district was interested, it was proposed to increase the duties by amounts varying from 25 to 500 per cent. on the previous duties. The special attention of His Majesty's Government was called to the matter, and their attention was particularly directed to the unequal incidence of the practice of charging the duties on the gross instead of the net weight, it being clearly pointed out that as British goods had to be strongly packed to undergo both a sea and land journey, our merchants and manufacturers were, in the ordinary course of things, at a considerable disadvantage as compared with their Continental competitors. His Majesty's Government were therefore urgently requested to consider the desirability of making a representation to the Swiss Government as to the possibility of an arrangement being made for the levying, in the future, of all customs duties on the nett weight instead of on the gross weight, the latter practice having been discovered, from previous experience, to be detrimental to British interests. Further correspondence took place with His Majesty's Government, and the final word of the Chamber was to the effect that very few concessions—and those only very slight—had been made in the new tariff, whilst several increases had been made in cases where the duty originally proposed had been declared to be excessive. It was, therefore, again urged that His Majesty's Government should do their utmost to obtain concessions, and especially that they should endeavour to persuade or induce the Swiss Government to arrange their duties on the nett instead of on the gross weight.

For many years the Chamber had, both alone and in conjunction with other Chambers, advocated the principle of the compulsory working of patents, but it is a sad fact that up to the period dealt with in this chapter no President of the Board of Trade had grasped the importance of the matter. It had, therefore, from time to time been allowed to slide; but as gradually other countries had, by dogged perseverance, fortified their position, and even in some cases begun to oust the British patentee, it was deemed essential to take a very strong line in order to secure full protection for British patentees—protection which could only be obtained by the enactment of legislative provisions for the compulsory working in this country of all patents granted here. The Act of 1906 has abundantly proved that in their representations the Chamber was voicing the views of, at any rate, the commercial community of the country.

In 1904 the Council was approached by various bodies as to the injurious effect on British trade on the embargo on Canadian cattle. At the outset the Council were somewhat doubtful as to whether the subject came within their province, but ultimately they decided that it did, and they therefore arranged for an interview with representatives of the Associations of the traders concerned. After long and careful deliberation upon the voluminous evidence which had been prepared and presented to them, the Council resolved that the [then] present restrictions on the importation of Canadian cattle into Great Britain were unjust so far as they were based upon the dread of disease existing among such cattle, since any outbreak of disease was as rigidly guarded against in Canada as in the Mother Country. It was further stated in the resolution that no infectious disease existed among Canadian cattle, and that the restrictions imposed were undesirable, as they resulted in interference with the free development of trade; in the decreased supply of cattle; and in the increased cost of meat to the British consumer. In their report the Committee called attention to the prevalence of tuberculosis among English cattle, and expressed the opinion that this was probably due to the fact that, under the prohibition, farmers were

Compulsory
Working of
Patents.

Embargo on
Canadian
Cattle

prevented from introducing any fresh blood to their herds, whilst owners of breeding stock in this country were allowed to export to foreign countries their very best animals which could stand the tuberculine test. In view of all the circumstances of the case, which were fully set forth in the report referred to, it was unanimously decided by the Council to address a representation to the President of the Board of Agriculture, urging upon the Government the desirability of steps being taken to amend the Diseases of Animals Act of 1896, so as to remove the embargo on Canadian cattle.

Shipping
Freights to
South Africa

Serious attention was called to the preferential rates given by British Steamship Companies to American shippers trading with South Africa, and the Bristol Chamber suggested the holding of a Conference to consider what steps should be taken in the interests of British exporters. From information prepared for the consideration of the Council it appeared that on certain very important lines of goods shipped from this district to South Africa the rates varied from 22/6 to 42/6 per ton to Cape Town and Algoa Bay, whilst our United States competitors enjoyed an all-round rate of 15/-; and that on the same goods to Natal and East London the English rates varied from 25/- to 52/6, against an all-round rate of 17/6 quoted to American exporters. The Council decided to take part in any Conference that might be called, and, as will be seen later, the matter was subsequently regarded by His Majesty's Government as of such serious importance that they appointed a Royal Commission to report upon the operations of Shipping Rings—of which the South African Ring was probably the most powerful.

London and
India Dock
Company's
Bill.

Upon the report of the Railway Rates Committee the Council considered a Bill, promoted by the London and India Docks Company, for the purpose of constituting the lines of railway at the docks to be railways within the meaning of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act. For the proper consideration of the matter the Committee had interviews with the Dock Company, with the London and North-Western Railway Company, and with shippers interested, and after most careful consideration decided that the enactment of the Bill would

discourage the carriage of traffic to steamers by barge or by cart and thus produce congestion on the dock railways and serious inconvenience to traders. The effect of the Bill, if passed, would have been to break up the then existing simple arrangement by which the whole of the docks in London were grouped, the F.O.B. rates to all docks being the same whether the traffic was trucked, carted, or barged. Mr. H. W. Edmunds, the Chairman of the Railway Rates Committee, gave evidence, on behalf of the Chamber, against the Bill, and the Committee's report on the subject was regarded as of so much importance that it was incorporated in the proceedings of the Committee of the House of Lords. Mr. Moon, K.C., leading counsel for the London and North-Western Railway, spoke very highly of the report, which gave an exhaustive description of the whole position, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the rejection of the Bill by the Lords' Committee was mainly due to the convincing nature of the report as to the serious injury which would be inflicted on the trading community if the Bill passed into law.

During the year the Chamber was very active in regard to the probable effect of proposed new tariffs. Reports were prepared on the proposals for revised customs' duties in Roumania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Switzerland, the last-named having been dealt with in a previous paragraph. Space does not permit of any detailed reference to the others, but it may here be said that the reports which were of an exhaustive description were transmitted to the Board of Trade, who were urged to advise the Government to take definite steps to prevent the threatened injury to the trade of the city and district.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, having appointed a Departmental Committee to inquire into the facilities for the use, without payment of duty, of spirits in arts and manufactures, and in particular into the operation of Section 8 of the Finance Act (1902), and to report whether the powers conferred upon the Commissioners of Inland Revenue permitted of adequate opportunities being given for the use of spirits in manufactures and in the

Foreign
Customs'
Tariffs.

Industrial
Alcohol.

production of motive power, or whether further powers were necessary for this purpose, and in the event of its being found that the facilities were inadequate to advise what further measures could be adopted, without prejudice to the safety of the revenue, and with due regard to the interests of producers of spirits in the United Kingdom. The General Purposes Committee of the Chamber reported to the Council that the question was one of great importance to many industries carried on in the Birmingham district, which were placed at a decided disadvantage as compared, *e.g.*, with Germany, whose manufacturers were given every facility for the use of commercial spirit duty free, and were thus placed in a superior competitive position. It was also pointed out that Section 8 of the Finance Act (1902) was utterly inadequate owing to the excessive restrictions imposed by the Inland Revenue Commissioners, and even when these were partially removed, in exceptional cases, to the very small quantity of spirit allowed to be used duty free—conditions which rendered the section almost inoperative. With the view of presenting evidence to the Departmental Committee a series of questions was addressed to members of the Chamber, and subsequently the Chamber was represented before the Committee by Mr. F. Barlow (Birmingham Lacquer Co., Ltd.), Mr. W. H. Bagley (Messrs. Samuel Heath and Sons, Ltd.), Mr. A. T. Cocking (Messrs. Kynoch, Ltd.), and Mr. Joseph Gittings (Messrs. Gittings, Hill and Boothby, Ltd.). The Birmingham evidence was of a most important character, and it is now well-known that the report of the Departmental Committee was soon followed by legislation which placed British manufacturers on a level with those of other countries.

**Merchandise
Marks' Act.**

A most serious case was submitted to the Council of what appeared to them to be a glaring instance of contravention of the definite provisions of the Merchandise Marks' Act, to the great detriment of the British manufacturer. The point of the case was that foreign glove buttons, known technically as "push buttons," and bearing the words "English-make," were being imported without any indication of their foreign origin. It appeared to be the practice of the Customs' Authorities

to permit this importation by persons who presumably imported the buttons for the purpose of placing them on English-made gloves, it being held that the words "English-make" on the articles referred to applied not to the buttons themselves but to the gloves on which they were to be placed. The Council expressed themselves as dissatisfied with this official interpretation, because there was no guarantee that they would be placed on British-made gloves. Indeed the Council had submitted to them evidence that large quantities of glove buttons covered with tissue paper were purchaseable as scrap in this country, and bore evidence of having been cut off new gloves, and the only inference they could draw was that the persons who cut off the buttons afterwards sold as scrap did so with the object of placing upon the imported gloves buttons marked English-make. A very strong representation was made to the Board of Trade on the matter, and the Secretary of the Chamber subsequently had very satisfactory interviews with them, but the Lords' Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury were obdurate, and have remained obdurate (except only for a slightly-increased stipulation as to the *bona-fides* of the importer) up to the present time. The Council of the Chamber in 1913 hold the same views as did their predecessors in 1904, and it is somewhat surprising that the Customs Authorities should be so indifferent to the best interests of British Commerce as to continue to permit of false representations of origin in any shape or form, which is exactly what their attitude amounts to when it is considered that glove buttons are entirely a separate article of commerce. If any argument were needed to show that the object of the foreigner is to mislead the purchaser it is to be found in the fact that in regard to glove buttons, whilst on the outside there appear the words "English-make," on the inside may usually be found a distinct indication of foreign origin, *e.g.*, "made in France."

Many other matters were discussed during the year 1904, including the question of the Registration of Trade Marks in China and the new Canadian Customs' Regulations designed to prevent dumping. Space does not permit, however, of these being dealt with in detail, Other
Matters.

and for information concerning them we can only refer members to the Minute Books and to the Journal of the Chamber—the latter publication including a verbatim report of all the proceedings of the Council.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

1905.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on February 28th and March 1st and 2nd, 1905, the Chamber was represented by Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. J. S. Taylor, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held at Liège, Belgium, on September 5th and 6th, by Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

Railway
Rates.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association Mr. G. Henry Wright, on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber, moved a resolution to the effect that the trading interests of Great Britain were injuriously affected by the discrepancy between the Railway rates for the carriage of goods from foreign towns to the sea and the rates charged in this country, and that this injury was increased by the fact that advantage was given by our Railway Companies to foreign producers by the conveyance of goods from the outports to the centres of distribution at lower rates than from the seats of home production. He therefore further moved that a memorial be presented to the President of the Board of Trade, praying that he would be pleased to receive a deputation from the Association to urge upon him the desirability of moving for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the question, and to recommend to Parliament some means for removing the "present grievance, either by a readjustment of the Railway rates or by the development of our Canals, or by both." In moving the resolution Mr. Wright observed that whilst on the Continent every nerve was strained

to cheapen the cost of the exportation of merchandise in order to assist to the utmost possible degree the Continental trader to compete in the world's markets, the traders of the United Kingdom had no such advantages. After developing this part of his case Mr. Wright called attention to the anomalies in this country in regard to goods sent from, say, Birmingham to another inland town as compared with those sent from a port to the same town. From Birmingham to Northampton he said the rate on hardware was equivalent to 5.1d. per ton per mile, whilst the rate from London to Northampton on the same goods was only 4.2d. per ton per mile. He gave many other figures with a similar tendency, and urged that the British manufacturer was placed at a disadvantage. In reply to a question by the President Mr. Wright said it was not alleged that the Railway Companies gave any illegal preference to foreign produce, but he added that the system in force was tantamount to a preference, although it was not illegal under the law. It should be stated, as Mr. Wright explained, that the law provides that the inward and the outward rate between two places shall be identical; but what the Chamber contended, and what is as true to-day as it was then, was that the rate charged from an inland town, *e.g.*, Birmingham, to another inland town, *e.g.*, Northampton, was higher than the rate charged to that town from a port. As there was a great deal of misunderstanding as to the law on the subject of undue (or illegal) preference, Mr. Wright withdrew the resolution, stating, however, that he would like to make it clear that he was objecting, not to specific cases of preference, but to a system which had the effect of creating a preference.

Mr. Wright, at the same meeting, moved on behalf of the Chamber, a resolution similar to that passed in the previous year, in favour of a reduction of the postal rates on magazines, newspapers, and periodicals sent from this country to Canada, and it was carried unanimously.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Liège in September, 1905, Mr. Wright, on behalf of the Chamber, moved:—"That having regard to the hardship inflicted on British manufacturers by the opera-

Postal Rates
to Canada.

Registration
of Designs.

tion of the laws of Continental countries relating to the registration of designs, which give no protection to designs not worked in such countries, this Association is of opinion that steps should be taken with the view of securing such an amendment of the Patents, Designs and Trade Marks' Acts (1883 to 1901) as will make it compulsory for designs registered in the United Kingdom to be worked in the country." In moving the resolution he pointed out that notwithstanding the mutual protection supposed to be afforded by the International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property such protection was not in fact afforded in every case. For instance, it was afforded in this country to every owner of a registered design, but in Germany it was afforded only to those who worked their designs in that country. After an interesting debate the motion was carried.

Status of
Chambers of
Commerce.

At the Autumnal Meeting held in Manchester in 1904 the Association had directed the appointment of a Special Committee, of which Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and Mr. Wright, of Birmingham, were members to consider the status of Chambers of Commerce, and notwithstanding the vigorous efforts made by Mr. Wright to secure a really strong report the majority of the Committee decided upon a very colourless document. At the Autumnal Meeting held in Liège in 1905 therefore Mr. Wright (on behalf of the Chamber) moved that the report be referred back for further consideration, with an instruction that the Committee should embody therein the following paragraphs, and make such other amendments as might thereby be rendered necessary, viz. :—

- (1) That in order to strengthen the representative character of Chambers of Commerce it is desirable that their constituencies should consist of the principal members of all trades and industries of the district.
- (2) That the present voluntary status of Chambers of Commerce with the mere power of Incorporation under the Companies' Acts was insufficient.
- (3) That Chambers of Commerce should be recognised by the Government as the official organs of the

commercial and industrial interests of their respective districts.

- (4) That in connection with the establishment of a Ministry of Commerce the status of Chambers of Commerce should be raised, and that provision should be made for them to be consulted on all questions of importance to the commercial and industrial interests of their respective districts.

In moving the resolution Mr. Wright, in one of the longest speeches delivered at that particular meeting, reviewed the whole position of Chambers of Commerce, and gave answers to all the objections likely to be raised. Speaking to the resolution Mr. E. Parkes, M.P. (who was the Chairman of the Special Committee) said: "Probably Mr. Wright was a few years or a generation before his time"; and yet, whilst referring to the condition of some Chambers as "most deplorable," Mr. Parkes did not see his way to support the resolution. After a most interesting debate, in which Lord Brassey, Sir Albert Rollit, Sir John Brunner, and others took part, Mr. Wright withdrew the parts of the resolution giving instruction to the Council, and the remaining part, which referred the matter back to the Executive Council, was carried.

It is essential that this volume should be kept within certain limits, and in view of this it is regretted that for subsequent years less and less of the many subjects dealt with by the Council of the Chamber can be referred to. These will be selected with as much care as possible, having regard to their interest at the moment, but it must be clearly understood that the Council had under consideration from this time many subjects which, owing to exigencies of space, cannot be mentioned even by name. What it is desired to avoid is the possible conclusion by the general reader that this volume is exhaustive of the questions considered by the Chamber. If it were it would have to be several times its present size, and would be most unwieldy.

During the year a large number of Bills introduced into Parliament were considered on the report of the Commercial Bills Committee, and the necessary steps were

The
Chamber's
Growth.

Commercial
Legislation.

taken to support or oppose them according as they were deemed to be advantageous or detrimental to the interests of the country. One of the most important Bills which was passed into law before the close of the session was the Trade Marks' Bill, introduced by Mr. J. Fletcher Moulton, K.C., M.P. (afterwards Lord Justice Fletcher Moulton). The Bill had been introduced in previous sessions, but had been gradually perfected in its scope and in its details. Unlike many members of Parliament who initiate legislation, Mr. Moulton took the Chambers of Commerce of the country into his confidence from the outset, and showed himself ever ready to be convinced that certain parts of the Bill would be better if amended in this direction or that, and as a result the Bill ultimately went forward as practically an agreed measure, and thus a long-needed reform was at last brought about. The Commercial Bills Committee reported that all the suggestions made by them had been accepted by Mr. Moulton and incorporated in the Bill.

Among the other Bills supported were the Prevention of Corruption Bill and those hardy-annuals, the Rating of Machinery Bill and the Registration of Firms Bill. Two Bills were vigorously opposed, viz. :—The Trade Disputes Bill and the Workmen's Compensation Bill, two measures emanating from the Labour Party, the object of one being to put Trade Unions above the law, and of the other to impose further burdens on employers, which the Council considered would seriously injure their interests. The Trade Disputes Bill was abandoned in Committee owing to an amendment being carried which destroyed its object; and the Workmen's Compensation Bill was subsequently dropped. No action was necessary with regard to the dozen other Bills as the Council considered they had no chance of passing into law, but they were carefully watched throughout the session, and immediate action would have been taken had it appeared to be necessary.

**American
Shipping
Proposals.**

A Bill was announced to be introduced into the United States Legislature for the purpose of developing the American Mercantile Marine, the proposals including subsidies to United States shipping and a tax on foreign

shipping. The latter, it was said, would take the form of a tonnage tax of 8 cents per net ton, not to exceed in the aggregate 80 cents per net ton in any one year on vessels entering any port of the United States from any port or foreign place in North America, Central America, the West Indian Islands, the Bahama Islands, the Bermuda Islands, Newfoundland, or the Coast of South America bordering on the Carribean Sea ; and a tax of 16 cents net per ton (not to exceed in the aggregate 1 dollar 60 cents net per ton in any one year) at each entry on all vessels entering the United States ports from any other foreign port or place. In reporting upon this matter the Council said it should be remembered that under the existing shipping laws foreign vessels were not allowed to engage in the coasting trade of the United States—which included a voyage from New York or Boston on the Atlantic to San Francisco on the Pacific Coast, a voyage to Porto Rico and also a voyage to the Phillipines from any United States port. It was estimated by the Council that the tax would in the aggregate amount to £600,000 per annum, most of which would be paid by British vessels whose trade would be seriously menaced, besides which it would be still more difficult for the British trader to sell his goods in the United States. The Council viewed the proposals with “grave concern,” as they were “evidently directed principally against the shipping of this country,” and an urgent representation was therefore made to the Foreign Office requesting that immediate steps be taken to protect British interests.

For many years the Chamber had advocated the constitution of a Minister of Commerce, and in 1905 it was stated privately that the Cabinet had decided to take no action in the matter. The local press were at once asked to draw attention to the subject and to express the great disappointment which the commercial community would feel if the announcement proved to be correct ; and a letter was addressed to the Prime Minister (The Rt. Hon. A. J. Balfour, M.P.) and the President of the Board of Trade, expressing deep regret that, notwithstanding the definite recommendation of the Earl of Jersey's Committee, and having regard to the vital importance of

Ministry of
Commerce:

commercial questions to the country, the Government had decided to take no steps to do what was so universally desired by the commercial community. It was stated that the Board of Trade as then constituted was not suited to the constantly-increasing needs of British trade and commerce, and the Government was urged to reconsider the matter with the view of steps being taken to introduce into Parliament a Bill for the creation of a Department of Commerce and Industry, to be placed under the control of a Cabinet Minister ranking equal with a Secretary of State. As is now known the succeeding Government—although it did not create a new department—raised the status of the President of the Board of Trade and thus made the office of President equal with that of any other department of State. It is still, however, unsuitable as a Ministry of Commerce, owing to its many conflicting duties, but notwithstanding this the raising of the status has already improved matters, and the office of President need not any longer be looked upon as a mere stepping-stone to a higher Cabinet position.

Railway
Rates,
Classification
and
Conditions.

The consideration of questions of Railway Rates, Classification, and Conditions has, during the past decade, formed one of the most important functions of the Chamber. At the Council Meeting held in March the Secretary reported that he duly proposed the resolution of the Chamber as to the advantages given by our Railway Companies by charging lower rates per ton per mile for the carriage of goods from the outports to the centres of distribution and consumption than were charged to such centres from the seats of home production. He added that the President of the Association (Sir Wm. H. Holland, M.P.) advised him to withdraw the resolution in view of a previous refusal of the President of the Board of Trade to consider the matter on a similar resolution, moved by your Chamber, and adopted by the Association in 1904; but that at first he did not feel disposed to do this, and pointed out to the meeting that the resolution did not allege the existence of any case of undue preference as legally interpreted, but that what was objected to was the system under which imported goods were carried from a port to an inland town at a lower rate than similar

goods would be carried to that town from another inland town. He gave the following illuminating instances, viz. :—

	Miles.	Rate.	Per Ton per Mile.
HARDWARE—			
London to Northampton ..	73	25/7	4.2d.
Birmingham to Northampton ..	49	20/10	5.1d.
Hull to York	45	15/5	4.1d.
Sheffield to York	48	20/10	5.2d.
London to Peterborough . .	116	28/5	2.9d.
Birmingham to Peterborough ..	81	25/4	3.8d.

CUTLERY—

Hull to York	45	15/5	4.1d.
Hull to Leeds	51	16/8	3.9d.
Sheffield to York	48	20/10	5.2d.
Sheffield to Leeds	43	18/—	5.0d.

PLATED GOODS—

London to Northampton ..	73	28/3	4.6d.
Birmingham to Northampton ..	49	24/9	6.0d.
Hull to York	45	18/9	5.0d.
Hull to Leeds	51	20/—	4.7d.
Hull to Sheffield	59	22/11	4.6d.
Sheffield to Leeds	43	21/4	5.9d.
Sheffield to York	48	24/7	6.1d.
Leeds to York	30	17/6	7.0d.

Continuing his report Mr. Wright said he argued that whilst this did not constitute undue preference within the meaning of the law, yet it did in fact give a preference to the foreign over the home producer. Finally, the Secretary said he withdrew the resolution, because, after the President's advice, he thought some delegates might be disposed to vote against it solely in consequence thereof. The Council, however, determined to proceed with the matter, and thereupon placed all the details before the Commercial Committee of the House of Commons.

One of the biggest questions undertaken by the Railway Rates Committee during the year was the preparation of an exhaustive report on the General Railway Classification and the need for its revision. A railway rates expert was engaged, and from the materials he supplied and the advice he was able to give, with some authority, a voluminous document was compiled which

dealt with the history of the classification; with the changes which had taken place owing to the changes in trade and commerce; with the phenomenal growth of the list of articles which are only accepted at owners' risk unless they are packed according to certain arbitrary conditions prescribed by the Railway Companies; with the complaints and suggestions made by a large number of members with regard to numerous articles, the classification of which was regarded as being too high; and with the recommendations of the Chamber for revision. Copies of the report were sent to the local Railway Companies, and a Conference was subsequently held with their representatives, at which the various matters were discussed. There can be no doubt that the report served a very useful purpose, and that many of the changes since made, either in the classification or in the quotation of exceptional rates, have followed as a direct or indirect result of the particulars placed before the Railway Companies by the Chamber.

Visit of
Canadian
Manufacturers'
Association.

On the 17th June, 1905, some 290 colonials (including ladies), members of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, arrived in England. On the 19th they waited on His Majesty King Edward VII. by Royal command. On the 26th they commenced a tour of the provinces, Walsall being the first place visited. At the conclusion of this visit on the evening of the 26th they were met at Walsall by the Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright), and left by special train for Birmingham, where they were all conducted to the Grand Hotel, the Chamber having previously arranged for their rooms. As the Chamber's visitors passed through the hall of the Grand Hotel to their rooms they were each presented with a package containing a souvenir, and also the necessary programme and tickets for their entertainments on the following day. The *Daily Post* said:—"The souvenir is the most tasteful little handbook of Birmingham that has hitherto been prepared." It consisted of over a hundred pages of letterpress, with about twenty beautiful illustrations, and was bound in cushion covers of red Morocco. The contents were specially compiled under the supervision of the Secretary

of the Chamber by writers conversant with the topics dealt with. At ten o'clock on the morning of the 27th June the visitors attended at the Council House, when the Lord Mayor (Alderman C. G. Beale) and the Chairman of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Taylor), accompanied by the principal civic officials and by officers of the Chamber, formally welcomed them to the city. Immediately after this the huge party was divided up, and boarded motor omnibuses and carriages for visits to a number of places of interest and factories in the city. At half-past twelve they began to reassemble at the Grand Hotel for the luncheon given in their honour by the Chamber. The Grosvenor Room was tastefully decorated, and the tables were ablaze with flowers, and a truly distinguished company, consisting of over 200 visitors and about 150 of the principal residents of the city, sat down to lunch under the Presidency of the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., who was supported by the Lord Mayor, the Rt. Hon. Joseph and Mrs. Chamberlain, and others. To say that our Canadian visitors had been languishing to see Mr. Chamberlain would only be to express a half-truth. They longed to hear him speak, and it was fitting they should have that pleasure in the city of which he was the most distinguished resident and the position and prosperity of which he had done so much to raise. For forty minutes Mr. Chamberlain addressed the gathering on the subject which lay nearest to his heart, namely, the Union and Co-operation of the Imperial Race—the Consolidation and the Capacity for Self-sustentation of the British Empire.” The ovation which Mr. Chamberlain received not only from his fellow-citizens but also from the Colonial visitors was one that has rarely been equalled and never excelled in the Grosvenor Room or any other banqueting room in Birmingham.

After the luncheon the visitors were taken by special train to Bournville, where they were entertained to tea by Mr. and Mrs. George Cadbury. In the evening a brilliant reception was given at the Grand Hotel by the Chairman of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Taylor) and Miss

Taylor, when the guests numbered about 500. Thus ended one of the most memorable Colonial visits that has ever been made to Birmingham.

Canal
Develop-
ment.

On the 10th May, 1905, Mr. H. W. Sambidge and the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) attended a Conference at Worcester to consider a draft scheme prepared by the Worcester Chamber of Commerce for the formation of a Trust to take over the Inland Waterways in the district between Birmingham and the Severn. The representatives of the Chamber said that whilst they would be willing to support any proposals for the development of the internal waterways on a definite national plan, they could not see their way to support a scheme such as that submitted, and which only dealt with a comparatively small section of the canals which it was proposed to transfer to a local or municipal trust. Ultimately the Worcester scheme was rejected by the Conference, and resolutions passed in favour of consolidating and co-ordinating the whole of the canals and inland waterways.

On the 28th June, 1905, a General Meeting was held to hear an address from Sir John Brunner, M.P., at the close of which a resolution was passed in favour of the constitution of a Central Canals' Trust to take over the principal canals and inland waterways.

South
African
Customs'
Duties.

The Council considered proposals made by a Select Committee appointed by the Government of Cape Colony to report upon the revision of the tariff, from which it appeared that considerable increases were contemplated; and a representation was made to the Colonial Office expressing the fear that unless effective steps were taken by His Majesty's Government the interests of British trade with South Africa were likely to be most injuriously affected. It was submitted that in no part of the King's Dominions had the Mother Country more right to be heard than in the South African Colonies upon which such immense sums of money had been paid out of the pockets of the British taxpayer, and the Chamber urged that the Government should not only take proper steps for safeguarding our interests but also to secure a British Preferential Tariff.

A Departmental Committee having been appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the law relating to Joint Stock Companies, a memorandum of suggestions was drawn up by the Commercial Bills' Committee and adopted by the Council and presented to the Committee. The Chamber recommended *inter alia* that a statutory distinction should be made between public and private Companies (a line of distinction was suggested similar to that since adopted); that the general law with regard to Companies should be relaxed as far as possible in respect to private Companies; that public Companies should be compelled to file either an annual balance sheet or an annual statement of assets and liabilities; that limited partnerships on the *en commandite* principle should be legalised (a reform afterwards incorporated in the Limited Partnerships' Act); and that means should be provided to enable a Company, without going into liquidation, to reconstruct and rearrange its capital in any way, either by addition or reduction and also to compromise with all or any class of its creditors.

The Tariff Committee of the Chamber prepared an interesting report on the taxes imposed on Commercial Travellers visiting certain parts of His Majesty's Dominions, and upon the consideration of this the Council addressed a representation to the Colonial Secretary urging him to approach the Governments of the Colonies concerned with a view to the exemption of all British commercial travellers from such taxes, and also to arrange for the matter to be discussed at the next Imperial Conference.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

1906.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 6th and 7th March, 1906, the Chamber was represented by Mr. J. S. Taylor,

Mr. F. B. Goodman, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, Mr. C. Rainsford, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held at Bristol on the 11th and 12th September, the delegates were Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Mr. R. H. Best, and the Secretary.

General
Railway
Classification

Mr. H. W. Edmunds, on behalf of the Chamber, moved at the Annual Meeting of the Association :—

“ That this Association is of opinion that each Chamber of Commerce should consider carefully the General Railway Classification of Merchandise, with the view of making proposals for its revision in connection with the trade of its own district.”

As has been stated in the previous chapter the Chamber itself undertook this task in the previous year, and prepared a very exhaustive and valuable report on the subject, as it affected the innumerable local industries. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Shipping
Freights.

At the same meeting Mr. Goodman moved a resolution to the effect that in the opinion of the Association the preferential treatment accorded by British Steamship Companies to foreign freight—particularly in connection with shipments to South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand—was injurious to the commercial interests of the United Kingdom, and that the President of the Board of Trade be asked to receive a deputation on the subject to urge upon him the necessity for some steps being taken to secure equality of treatment for British shippers. Mr. Goodman quoted startling examples, *e.g.*, freights from New York to Sydney, with transshipment at Liverpool, varied from 15/- to 20/- a ton, whilst British goods on the same steamer were charged from 30/- to 42/6 per ton; the freight on certain goods from Hamburg to New Zealand, with transshipment at London, was 31/-, whilst that on similar goods on the same vessel shipped from London was 60/-; freights from this country to South Africa were from 10/- to 30/- per ton higher than those from the United States. Mr. Goodman pointed out that the real seriousness of these preferences was better realised when it was remembered that in the case of goods carried at the rate of 40 cubic feet to the ton the amounts paid were considerably higher if calculated at per actual ton

weight, *e.g.*, a consignment might weigh only half-a-ton and yet, by measurement, be charged as two tons. The resolution was carried, and, as is well known, a Royal Commission was soon afterwards appointed to consider the question of Shipping Rings and Freights.

At the Autumnal Meeting, held in Bristol, Mr. R. H. Best moved that, having regard to the hardship inflicted on British manufacturers by the operation of the laws of Continental countries relating to the registration of designs, which gave no protection to designs not worked in such countries, steps should be taken with the view of securing such an amendment of the law as would make it compulsory for designs registered in the United Kingdom to be worked here, and that the President of the Board of Trade be asked to receive a deputation on the subject. The resolution was carried unanimously, and the deputation was subsequently received by Mr. Lloyd George at the Board of Trade, and it is satisfactory to observe that the precise alteration desired in our law was subsequently enacted by Parliament. The Birmingham representatives on the deputation were Messrs. J. S. Taylor, F. B. Goodman (both of whom spoke), H. C. Field, Oliver Goodwin, W. V. W. Kell, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

The Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire was held in London in July, 1906, when the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Sambidge, T. H. Ash, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary). On behalf of the Chamber Mr. H. W. Sambidge moved a resolution protesting against the taxes levied on commercial travellers in various parts of the Empire, and this was carried. Many other subjects were discussed at this important Congress and reported upon to the Council by the Chairman of the Chamber, but space will not permit of details either of the subjects or of the discussions being mentioned in this work.

A perusal of the proceedings of the Council for this year, which fill nearly one hundred pages of the Journal, will show that the work had increased in quite the same proportion as the membership, which had risen from about 250 in 1902 to 792 in the year 1906. It is, therefore,

obviously impossible to deal with or even to mention the greater portion of the subjects which were considered and upon which appropriate action was taken. It is proposed, therefore, only to mention a few, and the same practice will necessarily have to be followed for succeeding years in order to keep this volume down to a moderate length.

Commercial
Legislation.

The Council examined over twenty-one Bills introduced into the House of Commons during the session, and supported by every means in their power those which were likely to be beneficial to the trading community, and opposed those which were deemed to be detrimental to the interests of that community. Seven of these Bills were passed into law. One of them was the Workmen's Compensation Bill, the effect of which the Council considered would be to impose a heavier burden on employers of labour and result in hardship being inflicted on older workmen and also on those having some slight physical defect or infirmity—contingencies which were to be regretted. With the view of impressing the Government with a due sense of the serious character of some of the proposals in the Bill, the Council organised a powerful deputation to the Home Secretary (Mr. Gladstone). The deputation, which included representatives of the principal Chambers of Commerce throughout the country, was introduced by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., and the Birmingham Chamber was represented by Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Mr. Richard Parkes, Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary). Subsequently the Secretary had a long conference with the local members of Parliament at Westminster, in the course of which the views of the Chamber were discussed in detail. Therefore, no step was left unturned to secure reasonable modifications of the measure. It would be exaggerating to say that many of these amendments found their way into the Bill, but it is undeniable that the deputation had a very beneficial effect, because the material placed before the Government enabled them to resist drastic amendments by the Labour Party which would have rendered the Bill quite intolerable for employers.

Another Bill, with regard to which the Council was much disturbed, was the Trade Disputes' Bill, which, ultimately, passed into law. This Bill was opposed by every possible means, but these, unfortunately, did not avail either in the Commons or in the Lords, and thus the most unsatisfactory conditions of things existing since 1906 have served to embarrass employers unnecessarily. The Council considered that the Bill was lacking in even-handed justice, and the experience of the country since its enactment has abundantly proved the truth of this view.

In their annual report, after dealing with the two Bills mentioned above, the Council say :—

“It is pleasant to turn from these Bills to the Prevention of Corruption Bill and the Revenue Bill, both of which have been passed into law with the approval and support of the Chambers of Commerce of the country. The object of the former is to prevent the giving and receiving of illicit commissions; and the latter contains generous provisions with regard to the use of industrial alcohol duty free.”

Railway questions again loomed very largely in the operations of the Chamber, due, no doubt, to a considerable extent to the fact that the combination between Railway Companies was becoming more and more close. It would be impossible within the limited scope of this work to refer to the many questions that were raised during the year, but they were such as to convince the Council that the Railway Companies, realising the strength they had acquired as a direct result of their close co-operation, had entered upon a more drastic policy in dealing with their customers to the serious detriment of the latter. One of the matters to which the Council most strenuously objected was the arbitrary opening of packages. The Chamber had, through its Council, expressed its condemnation of the practice of some traders in seeking to obtain lower rates by wilfully misdeclaring traffic. The Railway Companies, instead of using the expression of this condemnation in a legitimate way availed themselves of it to the extent of arranging for an indiscriminate opening of packages—forgetting that in their days of

Railway
Questions.

competition they deliberately encouraged the consignment of mixed parcels under certain denominations. For instance, certain classes of consignments peculiar to Birmingham had been, for many years, declared as "hardware" with the cognizance and even with the consent or on the advice of Railway officers. This was suddenly stopped, not because it was technically incorrect as regarded the bulk of the articles but because there happened to be in a parcel of hardware one or more articles of a higher class. As soon as an agreement had been arrived at by the Railway Companies on this particular matter steps were taken to put a stop to the previous general and recognised practice, and in order to protect one Railway Company against another Clearing House Inspectors were appointed to order the opening of this package or that. It is undeniable that from a strict legal point of view the Railway Companies have no right to do this, but, apparently, they, with their enormous resources, are prepared to take the risk, even though after the illegal opening of the traders' consignments the articles are inefficiently packed and arrive at their destination in an unmarketable condition. The Council made the strongest possible protest against this practice, and offered the very reasonable suggestion that if the accuracy or truthfulness of a declaration supplied by a consignor is doubted the obvious course is to call upon the latter to furnish proof of its correctness or to open the package and inspect the goods at the sending station only, and then under the supervision of the consignor or his agent.

In regard to the General Railway Classification, and on the subject of the Reports prepared in 1905, the Council addressed a letter to the local Railway Companies stating *inter alia* that the traders of the Birmingham district desired to be put into closer touch with the authority (*i.e.*, the General Goods Managers' Conference), which controlled rates and classification, and they emphasized this by pointing out that they were not satisfied that their statements of requirements, their struggles against foreign competition, and their views on trade generally should continue to filter through

Railway traffic canvassers and collectors, goods managers, and district goods managers. It was not suggested that those gentlemen did not endeavour to satisfy local requirements, but there was a strong feeling that there was too much centralization in Railway control, which denied to these officials adequate and reasonable powers to settle local questions. They were, the Council added, apparently mere reporters, and their reports were carried upward and onward until they got to the Goods Managers' Conference in a grossly attenuated form and deficient of the leading interests of the traders. With the view of providing a remedy the Council suggested the establishment of a quarterly "rates and classification Conference" between railway and trader representatives, with power to arrive at binding settlements. The reply received from the Railway Companies was of a vague character. It was stated, in reply, that it had been the practice of the Chief Goods Managers, both individually and collectively, to meet representatives of Chambers of Commerce on particular subjects, and that if the suggestion was that the proposed Conferences should be vested with powers of decision then it would be obviously quite out of the question. The Council replied that they were not aware of the stated practice of the Chief Goods Managers, but that if it were as reported then from the growing number of serious complaints and the great dissatisfaction existing amongst traders it would appear to have led to little or no result. As an alternative to their previous suggestion the Council suggested the local Railway Companies should empower their District Goods Managers to attend a series of meetings in Birmingham, and the reply to this was that the course suggested would "obviously be very inconvenient," but that the Goods Managers' Conference of the Railway Clearing House would be quite prepared to receive a small deputation with regard to a few specific matters the Chamber desired the Companies to consider. The Council were much disappointed with this reply because, whilst it might be inconvenient for the Goods Managers to have a series of meetings in Birmingham, it was quite impracticable for the Chamber, or the Midland Chambers of Commerce, to deal adequately with any part

of the question in a single meeting, or, indeed, in several meetings in London. After careful consideration, however, it was decided that if no other course could be secured the offer of the Railway Companies be accepted. Later in the year a deputation, consisting of Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, Mr. J. J. Gittings, and the Secretary of the Chamber, waited upon the Goods Managers' Conference at the Railway Clearing House, when the Managers present represented practically all the Railway Companies of Great Britain, and had a conference lasting over two hours, at the end of which the Managers stated they would give careful consideration to the representations made and also to the reports which had previously been forwarded. Two or three months later a reply was received, in the course of which the Railway Companies made certain concessions. These were, of course, accepted, but the Council publicly made it clear that they only met a very small part of their demands. One of the most important concessions was that with regard to mixed consignments—the arrangement being “that packages consisting principally of hardware and containing 90 per cent. or upwards in weight of articles in the hardware list, including articles coming under Class 3 or lower classes, and 10 per cent. or under in weight of articles in higher classes be charged at the hardware rate.”

Commercial
Agents in the
Colonies.

In January, 1906, the Council stated that the United Kingdom had not a single commercial agent in Australia, New Zealand, or Canada. There was a small number of correspondents appointed by the Board of Trade in South Africa, but they also filled other important positions, and could not, therefore, give much thought to the interests of British trade. In other parts of the Empire there were also certain officers designated by the Board of Trade to answer enquiries. Against all this, however, there were in Canada alone, representing foreign countries and reporting upon trade matters, no less than 372 Consular officers, of whom 189 represented the United States, 16 Germany, 15 France, 14 Brazil, 10 each Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, and 33 Norway and Sweden, whilst even Columbia, Greece, and Haiti were represented. The Council were convinced that this deplorable condition

of things was most detrimental to the interests of British trade, and it is interesting now to observe that in all the self-governing Colonies there are British Trade Commissioners and many correspondents, the appointment of the former being due, no doubt, to representations made to the Government, those of the Birmingham Chamber having been among the first and most vigorous.

Early in 1906 the Chamber considered the question Proving of
Firearms. of the Proving of Fire Arms, in regard to which a communication had previously been sent to the Foreign Secretary, calling his attention to the statement made in a report by H.M. Vice-Consul at Liège to the effect that foreigners preferred the mark of the Liège Proof House, as they considered it to be "of the utmost importance that arms should be seriously tested." In his reply the Foreign Secretary had stated that the comment referred to was a quotation from the report of the Directors of the Liège Proof House and not an expression of the personal opinion of the British Vice-Consul. The Council replied that it mattered not whether the statement was that of the Vice-Consul or of the Director of the Proof House of Liège. It was not unreasonable, they added, to assume that the effect, if not the intention, of the statement was to cast a reflection upon the efficiency of the English proof, and they reiterated their view that the statement should never have been quoted—at any rate, until it had been submitted to the English Proof House Authorities or to the Chamber of Commerce. It was also again pointed out that all arms proved in this country were tested under stringent regulations agreed to and approved by the War Office, who were careful to see that the rules of proof were efficient and such as would ensure a serious test. A further letter was, therefore, addressed to the Foreign Office, urging that the Vice-Consul's statement should be withdrawn, and suggesting that if any further evidence was required as to the Rules of Proof in the United Kingdom the War Office should be consulted for an authoritative opinion as to the adequacy or otherwise of the English proof. By this action the Council made a firm stand in the interests of the English gun

trade, and they have every reason to believe that their action was effective as no further misleading reports have been sent from Belgium.

Trade Marks,
Rules, and
Fees.

The object of the Trade Marks' Act (1905), referred to in the previous chapter, was to put our trade marks law on a proper basis, to widen the definition of a registrable trade mark, and to confer other benefits on trade mark owners. When the Board of Trade, however, came to draw up the new Rules and Scale of Fees it was found that the anticipated benefits would be seriously reduced. As in duty bound the Chamber at once made a telegraphic protest against the proposed restrictive rules and the new scale of fees. Most of the old fees had been increased by at least 50 per cent., some by 100 per cent., some by 200 per cent., and some by an even larger percentage. As a result of the general opposition throughout the country the Board of Trade convened a conference, at which the Chamber was represented by Mr. Richard Parkes and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright). This conference lasted nearly three hours, and was, perhaps, one of the most satisfactory it has ever been the lot of the Chamber to be represented at. Several of the proposed fees were reduced from 40/- to 10/-, some from 30/- to 20/-, others from 20/- to 10/-, others from 60/- to 20/-, others from 80/- to 20/-, others from 100/- to 20/-, and another from 100/- to 10/-; and, in addition, not a few of the objectionable features of the proposed rules were removed. There need be no hesitation in saying that had it not been for the existence of vigilant Chambers of Commerce the chances are that the proposed rules and excessive fees would have been put into force practically without amendment, so that work of an invaluable character was accomplished by the Chamber and by its representatives at the conference, who were publicly thanked by the Council for their successful services.

Canals.

The Government having appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the question of the development of the Canals and Inland Waterways of the country, the Council decided that the Chamber should apply to be heard, and the General Purposes Committee were appointed to select one or more witnesses to present the evidence.

It was also decided that the evidence of the Chamber should be directed to particular points, viz. :—(1) the necessity of cheapening transport between Birmingham and the sea and intermediate inland towns ; (2) the advantages which would be conferred upon this great industrial and commercial district by the development and extension of the existing canals and inland waterways ; (3) the desirability of such canals and waterways being vested in a central trust, with, if necessary, local advisory bodies formed under the organisation of Chambers of Commerce ; and (4) the impracticability of carrying out a proper scheme of development by local or municipal trusts.

Having regard to the very great importance of the question the Council felt that it would be desirable to convene a conference of the Local Authorities and Chambers of Commerce of the Midland Counties and the principal ports in order that the evidence presented by them should, if possible, be on similar lines. This conference was held at the Council House, Birmingham, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor (Councillor Reynolds) on the 5th July, 1906, when there were present representatives of thirty-two Local Authorities, fourteen Chambers of Commerce, and other Associations, and after an interesting discussion the following resolutions were carried with one dissentient (to wit, a gentleman who desired to speak after the mover had replied, and who was ruled out of order by the Lord Mayor), viz :—

- (1) That in order to provide healthy competition with Railways it is desirable that a complete system of through communication by water should be provided between centres of commercial, industrial, or agricultural importance and between such centres and the sea.
- (2) That having regard to the national importance and benefit of such a system it is desirable that the canals and inland waterways should be acquired and controlled by the Government or by a Public Trust on which the Government would have a preponderating vote.

- (3) That in either case the interest and sinking fund on capital expenditure should be guaranteed by the Government.

At this conference the City Corporation was represented by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Lawley Parker, and Councillor G. H. Kenrick, and the Chamber by Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. T. H. Ash, Mr. D. W. Probert, Mr. E. B. Ivatts, Mr. Alfred J. Ash, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

Compulsory
Working of
Patents.

On the 9th April, 1906, Sir Francis W. Lowe, M.P., Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary) on behalf of the Chamber, joined a deputation from the Association of Chambers of Commerce to the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. D. Lloyd George, M.P.) for the purpose of urging upon him the necessity for such an amendment of the Patent Law as would enforce in the United Kingdom the forfeiture of all patents granted here which were worked without, but not within, the United Kingdom after the lapse of three years from the date of application in the country of origin, unless the patentee could justify his inaction to the satisfaction of the Board of Trade. Mr. Lloyd George showed considerable sympathy with the objects of the deputation, and promised to consult with a small Committee as to the practicability of proposals being formulated to carry out the views laid before him by the deputation, and it is now common knowledge that very shortly afterwards he proposed and carried legislation on the matter, which was heartily welcomed by the commercial community. It is also interesting here to repeat that the Birmingham Chamber had advocated such a reform for nearly half-a-century.

Spanish
Customs'
Tariff.

Early in 1906 the Chamber was asked, in view of the fact that the Spanish Customs' Tariff was about to undergo revision, by the Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade, to report as to the tariff classification and rates of duty. Very few details of the proposals were available, but from a perusal of such as were available the Chamber said that they were calculated to create alarm in the minds of manufacturers and merchants engaged in the Spanish trade. Under the draft Bill most

of the articles in which this district was interested might be subjected to rates of duty exceeding 50 per cent., and there appeared to be no limit as to the extent to which this figure might be exceeded. It was added that the seriousness of the matter would be understood when it was explained by merchants of great experience that British trade with Spain was already in the balance. The expense of sending a single traveller to Spain was not less than £500 per annum, and the market was even, at that time limited both as to the volume of trade and the range of articles it was possible to sell in any quantity. As a single instance it was pointed out that some years previously it was possible to sell in Spain completed bedsteads; that, owing to a change in the tariff, the demand was then reduced to one for finished parts to be assembled in Spain; that subsequently only rough parts were demanded; and that finally only bedstead mounts could be sold. For the moment these latter were ordered in considerable quantities by Spanish bedstead manufacturers, but even this trade did not last long, and, at the time of reporting in 1906 it was only possible to sell small parcels to hardware dealers who required them for stock, and whose orders were too small for the Spanish manufacturer to look at. Concluding their report the Council said that whilst any slight reductions in the tariff would be welcomed as tending to make it tolerable for merchants to continue their operations in the Spanish market, any increase would, in all probability, prove to be disastrous. Subsequently further details were received from the Board of Trade, and at the end of a considered reply the Council stated that the effect of the proposals would be such as to reduce the export of the articles concerned by at least two-thirds, and that, in this event, merchants would be compelled to seek for other markets as they could not afford (considering the matter in the light of a business proposition) to maintain a traveller in a market in which expenses could not be earned.

A communication was received from the Departmental Committee on Bankruptcy Law, asking whether the Chamber desired to give evidence on the defects of the Bankruptcy Law Amendment.

existing law, and as to any amendments that might be proposed with a view to providing a remedy. The Council considered it to be most desirable that evidence should be given, and a Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Mr. J. P. Achurch, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, Mr. Howard Heaton, and Mr. George Shipway was appointed to prepare the same. This Sub-Committee entered upon its task without delay, and prepared a memorandum of evidence to be submitted to the Departmental Committee on behalf of the Chamber by Mr. Howard Heaton. In the memorandum the Sub-Committee made recommendations with regard to (1) the appointment of Official Receivers as whole-time servants ; (2) the necessary extension of the provisions of the law with regard to Acts of Bankruptcy ; (3) the simplification of the requirements of the existing law with regard to proving an Act of Bankruptcy ; (4) the adoption of a simpler procedure in relation to proofs of debt ; (5) the adoption of more elastic provisions as to the giving of proxies ; (6) the giving of greater facilities of proof in respect of law costs incurred prior to the issue of a receiving order ; (7) the acceleration of meetings of creditors ; (8) the limitation of the rights of creditors for very small amounts to vote ; (9) the increase of existing facilities for compositions in bankruptcy ; (10) the omission of a public examination in certain cases ; (11) the regulation of the remuneration of trustees ; (12) the reduction of certain fees ; (13) the amendment of the law, in the interests of creditors, with respect to property passing to a trustee in bankruptcy ; (14) the restriction of the present law in regard to preferential payments in bankruptcy for wages, rent, and gas and water ; (15) the desirability of all bankrupts (undischarged) notifying their address to the County Court every six months ; (16) the amendment of the Debtors' Act (1869) in the interests of creditors as against debtors ; (17) the giving to creditors the right to apply for and obtain administration orders ; (18) the registration of partnership names in bankruptcy cases ; and (19) the giving of increased facilities for the conclusion of Deeds of Arrangement. Mr. Howard Heaton subsequently gave evidence on behalf

of the Chamber, and it is satisfactory to observe that in 1913 an Act was passed amending the Bankruptcy Laws which incorporated many of the suggestions of the Chamber.

In 1905 the Council issued a "Commercial Year Book"—the first of its kind ever published by a Chamber of Commerce of the United Kingdom. It had been brought to the notice of the Council that it was the practice of German Chambers of Commerce with their official status and permanently-secured revenue to supply to German Consuls throughout the world carefully classified lists of manufacturers. Obviously such a practice would have been impossible in this country owing to the limited income of our Chambers of Commerce and the voluntary character of their membership. But the Council of the Birmingham Chamber were not to be dismayed, and thus the idea of the Commercial Year Book was conceived. It consists of some 150 to 200 pages of interesting statistical and other commercial information and of an exhaustive trade index of the members of the Chamber. The circulation is 10,000 copies, which go to every part of the world. In particular a copy is sent to every British Embassy and Consulate and to every Chamber of Commerce (British, Colonial, or Foreign), the remaining copies being distributed among merchants and traders and others, including the clubs in the principal cities of the world. That the publication of the book has been thoroughly justified is proved by the fact that at the time of writing the fifth issue is assured. There is, in addition, abundant evidence that the publication has done much to promote British trade in articles manufactured in the Birmingham district, and if further proof were needed it is to be found in the fact that the example of Birmingham has been followed by others Chambers, notably Glasgow, Leeds, Bristol, Leicester, and Belfast.

The Council considered the desirability of giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Poor Laws, and instructed the General Purposes Committee to report upon the matter. The reference to the Commission was two-fold, namely to inquire and report upon (1) the working of the laws relating to the relief of poor persons,

Commercial
Year Book.

Royal
Commission
on Poor
Laws.

and (2) the various means which had been adopted outside the poor laws for meeting distress arising from want of employment, particularly during periods of severe industrial depression. Whilst the Chamber could not speak authoritatively upon the first part of the inquiry it was decided that evidence might very well be submitted upon the second part, and for this purpose a long memorandum indicating the general lines of such evidence was drawn up, and the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) was appointed as the official witness. The preliminary paragraphs of the memorandum led up to the necessity for the creation of some official organisation whereby there might, in course of time, be established a system of complete intercommunication between the employer who wanted workmen and the employee who wanted work; and in regard to this very carefully thought-out proposals were made for the establishment of Labour Exchanges. As is well-known these Exchanges have since been established throughout the country, and whilst it cannot be said that they have adequately "filled the gap" it is undeniable that they have furnished a means of inter-communication which is a distinct improvement on the haphazard system that previously existed.

National
Expenditure.

In October, 1905, the Council appointed a Special Committee to report upon the subject of National and Local Expenditure. Naturally the inquiry was a very wide one, but it was not expected that the figures would be so astounding as those set forth in the report of the Committee published in 1906—a report which was applied for from every part of the United Kingdom and from many parts of the world, particularly the United States of America. Within the limits of this volume it is impossible to give any extensive details, but a few may appropriately be quoted. It was found that Imperial expenditure had grown as follows :—

Decade—Year Ended 31 March.	Aggregate Expenditure.	Yearly Average.
1882—1891	£877,030,517	£87,703,052
1885—1894	891,788,107	89,178,811
1890—1899	949,667,830	94,966,783
1896—1905	1,396,565,483	139,656,548

and that the figures for Local expenditure were :—

Decade—Year	Aggregate	Yearly
Ended 31 March.	Expenditure.	Average.
1882—1891	£666,070,072	£66,607,007
1884—1893	693,319,174	69,331,917
1890—1899	874,781,535	87,478,153
1894—1903	1,130,646,888	113,064,689

To emphasize the importance of these figures a Table was published showing the effect of the expenditure on the individual and on the family. The Table was given in three parts, viz. :—

	1881—2	1092—3	Increase per cent.
Imperial and Local Revenue	£145,085,680	£297,364,071	100
(a) per head of population	£4 4 1	£7 0 6	67
(b) per family of five per annum	£21 0 5	£35 2 6	67
(c) per family of five per week	£0 8 1	£0 13 6	67
Ditto raised by Taxation—	£99,900,000	£197,600,000	97
(a) per head of population	£2 16 10	£4 13 4	64
(b) per family of five per annum	£14 4 2	£23 6 8	64
(c) per family of five per week	£0 5 5	£0 9 0	64
Imperial and Local Expenditure	£146,696,374	£330,170,081	125
(a) per head of population	£4 3 3	£7 16 1	88
(b) per family of five per annum	£20 16 3	£39 0 5	88
(c) per family of five per week	£0 8 0	£0 15 0	88

With such astounding facts and figures before them it is not to be wondered at that the Committee of the Chamber submitted that the result of their investigation was startling and deserved the most careful consideration of the business community ; and the public is very much indebted to the Chamber, who carried out the task of compiling the figures. Copies of the report were sent to the Government, and a hope was expressed that economy would be exercised in the future.

A letter was received from the Board of Trade inviting the Chamber to send a representative to confer with them as to the operation of the Law relating to Designs and the need for its amendment. The Secretary subsequently had an interview with the Secretary of the Board of Trade and the Registrar of Trade Marks, in the course of which

Registration
of Designs.

he represented that *inter alia* the law should be amended and strengthened so as to require the use in manufacture in this country of any design registered here and used in manufacture in a foreign country. As is now well known the compulsory legislation desired has since been enacted.

University
Scholarship.

During 1906 the Council undertook the responsible task of making a permanent provision for the establishment by the Chamber of a Scholarship in the Faculty of Commerce at the University of Birmingham. It was desired that the scholarship should be of the annual value of from £40 to £60, and steps were at once taken to create an endowment fund. Generous donations were given by many members of the Chamber, and the scholarship was successfully inaugurated in 1907, the value for the first three years being fixed at £50 per annum. Since the expiration of that period the value has been £40 a year.

In connection with the University the year 1906 was also rendered noteworthy by the fact that Mr. J. S. Taylor (as Chairman of the Chamber) was elected a Life Governor, and was also appointed a member of the first Advisory Board formed in connection with the Faculty of Commerce. The other members of the first Board who were connected with the Chamber were Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Mr. G. H. Claughton, Mr. F. Dudley Docker, Mr. A. H. Gibson, Mr. Edward Hickman, Mr. W. E. Hipkins, and Mr. F. S. Walker.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

1907.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Messrs. E. Parkes, M.P., J. S. Taylor, H. W. Edmunds, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary) represented the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 5th, 6th, and 7th

March, 1907, whilst at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Liverpool on the 18th and 19th September, the delegates were Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Sambidge, Geo. Shipway, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

At the Annual Meeting Mr. H. W. Edmunds, on behalf of the Chamber, moved a resolution approving of the principle of the Railways' (Contracts) Bill, introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. A. G. Hooper, M.P., in the previous session. The object of the Bill was to limit by statute the meaning of the term "owners' risk" in relation to Railway traffic. The resolution was carried unanimously.

At the same meeting Mr. J. S. Taylor moved a resolution to the following effect:—

"That this Association is of opinion that the time has arrived when his Majesty's Government should take into serious consideration the subject of National Insurance for the working classes against accident, sickness, invalidity, and old age on the lines, so far as is practicable, of the comprehensive system which has operated so successfully in Germany; and that a memorial be presented to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary praying that they will be pleased to receive a deputation from this Association to urge upon them the desirability of a Royal Commission being appointed to inquire into and report upon the subject."

In moving this resolution the Chamber showed how keenly and clearly they anticipated coming events. They pointed out that the subject was coming to the front whether employers liked it or not, and that, rather than have hasty legislation, a Commission should first be appointed to inquire into and report upon the whole subject. In the course of an interesting discussion, however, it appeared that very few of the delegates had considered the problem, and ultimately the previous question was carried by 55 votes to 38. It was afterwards resolved, however, that Mr. Taylor's exhaustive speech should be printed and circulated by the Association so that the matter could be again discussed at the next

Railway
Rates—
Owners'
Risk.

National
Insurance
Against
Accident,
Sickness, &c.

meeting. This was done, and at the Autumnal Meeting at Liverpool in September, 1907, the resolution was carried.

Commercial
Organisation

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association, held at Liverpool, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, on behalf of the Chamber, moved :—

“That having regard to the increasing necessity for legislative and administrative action in the interests of trade and industry, it is, in the opinion of this Association, desirable that steps be taken by His Majesty’s Government to strengthen and consolidate the commercial organisation of the United Kingdom by :—

- (1) The appointment of a Minister of Commerce of Cabinet rank.
- (2) The creation of an influential and thoroughly representative Board of Commerce.
- (3) The conferring of an official status upon Chambers of Commerce ; and
- (4) The provision of means for a complete system of inter-communication between the Chambers of Commerce and the Minister and Board of Commerce ;

and that the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade be asked to receive a deputation on the subject.

After considerable discussion the motion was withdrawn in favour of another, which was carried unanimously, calling attention to the manner in which other Governments actively assisted their traders, and urging the conversion of the Board of Trade into a Ministry of Commerce on modern and representative lines.

Growth of
the Chamber

The growth of the Chamber was proceeding at an almost phenomenal rate, and with it there was also a continuous extension of its activities and scope of operations. During 1907 the number of subjects dealt with exceeded anything that had gone before, so that it will only be possible to mention a few of them in order to keep this volume within reasonable limits.

Over twenty Bills were examined and reported upon by the Commercial Bills Committee during the year. Commercial Legislation. Seven of these were supported and three opposed—the remainder being carefully watched throughout the session. No less than six of those which the Chamber supported were passed into law, viz. :—(1) the Patents and Designs' Bill, which provided for the compulsory working of patents and designs—a measure for many years advocated by the Chamber ; in the case of patents so long ago as the time when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was a member of the Council ; (2) the Limited Partnerships' Bill, the principle of which the Chamber had strenuously advocated for about half-a-century ; (3) the Lights on Vehicles' Bill, which provided for the more adequate lighting of vehicles by night ; (4) the Butter and Margarine Bill, which was necessary for the protection of ordinary consumers ; (5) the Employers' Liability Insurance Companies' Bill, and (6) the Companies' Bill, which provided certain necessary amendments of the law relating to Joint Stock Companies. The Bills opposed were the Sweated Industries' Bill, the Wages Board Bill, and the Eight Hours' Bill, neither of which was passed into law.

There was, during the year, much correspondence with the Colonial Office as to the injurious effect of the Australian Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act (1906), Australian Commerce—Trade Descriptions. and the complicated regulations issued thereunder. The object of the Act was to protect the public against fraudulent descriptions as to quality or origin—an object which the Chamber cordially approved—but they felt that the regulations were altogether too drastic and would hinder legitimate trade. To take a single instance, it was made unlawful to describe an article as being "German silver." It had to be marked "German (Imitation) Silver," as if any intelligent person would buy German silver goods and imagine they contained any silver. The result of the Chamber's efforts was not to secure any amendment of the law, but to obtain clearer definitions as to the exact requirements in particular cases, and it may safely be said that very valuable work was accomplished—work for which the Council received hearty congratulations from many members.

**Customs'
Duties on
Trade
Catalogues.**

Very serious inconvenience and even loss was caused to manufacturers by the laws of various Colonies requiring the payment of Customs' Duty on Trade Catalogues, Price Lists, etc., and the Council used every means in its power to secure the repeal of the duty. This desired end was, however, not attained, but arrangements were made for prepayment of duty so that the addressees would not be inconvenienced by any demand for payment on the delivery of the catalogues, price lists, etc. Communications on the subject were addressed to the Colonial Office, to whom the Postmaster-General subsequently replied that he could offer no facilities in regard to the prepayment of duty. By dint of persistent representation, however, concessions were obtained, which, while they did not involve the removal of the duty, provided for certain exemptions in the case of South Africa and for the issue of duty stamps both for Australia and South Africa. On the 9th May, 1907, Sir William Lyne, Australian Minister of Trade and Customs, who was attending the Colonial Conference in London, received a deputation on the matter, and in his reply stated that, whilst he could not hold out any hope of a removal of the duty, he hoped that before leaving England he would be in a position to adopt the suggestions made by the Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber and to authorise the Commonwealth offices in London to issue prepayment duty stamps so as to facilitate the transmission of catalogues through the post. In accordance with his promise Sir William Lyne afterwards made the necessary arrangements, and thus a boon of some considerable value was obtained.

**Gun Trade
and India.**

The Government of India had issued a decree prohibiting the importation of rifles of .450 bore into that country, as a result of which many manufacturers and merchants were threatened with serious losses. Urgent representations were made by the Gun and Ammunition Trade Section of the Chamber that some relief should be conceded, and shortly afterwards the India Office announced that representations having been made to them that the prohibition had caused heavy loss and hardship to traders both in this country and in India, the Govern-

ment of India, while adhering to their decision to stop the importation of such rifles, had consented to permit the importation for a reasonable period of sporting rifles of .450 bore, which manufacturers could prove were ordered and actually under manufacture on September 11th, 1906.

On the 18th February, 1907, the Chamber was represented at a Conference convened by the Mansion House Association on Railway and Canal Traffic, and held in London, with regard to the combinations and agreements that had been entered into between Railway Companies, and it was unanimously decided to approach the President of the Board of Trade with the view of urging upon him the nature of the injury inflicted on traders as a result of these arrangements, and asking him to call for publication of the details thereof. At the Council Meeting of the Chamber, held on the 20th February, a resolution was passed expressing the opinion that the time had arrived when the question of the whole relationship between the Railway Companies and the Trading and Agricultural communities should be fully inquired into, with a view to legislation which would remove "those conditions of Railway rates and contracts which now press so onerously upon the trade of the country." It is significant that in 1913 (the Centenary Year of the Chamber) a Royal Commission was appointed, but, in the meantime, an enormous amount of spade work had been done by the Birmingham Chamber both individually and through the Association of Chambers of Commerce.

On June 4th, 1907, with the authority of the Council, the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Shipping Rings. In the course of this he gave many details of serious preferences granted by British Steamship Lines to Foreign goods, but his evidence was mainly directed to the "deferred rebate system," and the main principles of this evidence had previously been approved by the Merchants' section and confirmed by the Council. The Chamber were not prepared to advocate the abolition of the system, because it had its advantages, viz.:—an equal charge to all British shippers, stability of rates, and insured regular sailings. The principal objection to it

Railway
Companies
and Traders.

Shipping
Rings

was that whilst it bound the shipowner and the shipper so far as their trade from English ports was concerned it gave the former perfect freedom in quoting rates for shipment from foreign ports, and this freedom had been used to the detriment of this country in the South African Freight War, when the Shipping Ring, in order to keep out foreign shipping, for a long period gave preferential rates to our commercial rivals. With the view of minimising the evil complained of Mr. Wright, on behalf of the Chamber, suggested that some modification of the rebate system should be made and proposed that the period for refunding rebates should be altered from 15 months to 9 months—the accounts to be made up every six months and refunds to be made within three months thereafter; that the primage should be placed in the hands of a separate body on which shipowners and shippers should each be represented; that shipowners should undertake not to carry foreign freight at a less rate than British freight on the same class of steamer; and that the classification should be published and be the same from all ports.

Canal
Develop-
ment.

On the 19th March, 1907, the Chairman of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Taylor) and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) gave evidence before the Royal Commission on Canals and Inland Waterways. Mr. Taylor's evidence was directed mainly to the economic side, and he gave the Commission much useful information as to the manner in which the industries of the Midlands were suffering from the high costs of transport. Mr. Wright's evidence was mainly directed to the administrative side, and he pointed out that the difficulties that would be encountered by municipal effort to improve the canals and waterways would be overcome if the whole system were vested in a Central Board, with a Government guarantee and the Municipalities empowered merely to provide terminal facilities in their own districts in the shape of docks, wharves, and warehouses. It is interesting to observe that the conclusions and recommendations of the Commission followed very closely the lines of the evidence given by the Chamber's witnesses, and that this evidence was based on the resolutions passed in 1906

at the Council House, Birmingham, by the Conference convened by the Chamber, and which was attended by representatives of thirty-two local Authorities and fourteen Chambers of Commerce.

During the year 1907 the casting of brass, the tinning of hollow-ware with a mixture of lead and tin, and the generation, transformation, distribution, and use of electricity in factories were certified by the Home Secretary to be dangerous within the meaning of the Factory and Workshop Act (1901) and draft special regulations were issued concerning them. The Chamber lodged objections against these regulation, and demanded a public inquiry, which was granted in each case. Conferences of manufacturers concerned were afterwards summoned, and arrangements made for their representation at the inquiry. In the case of the Brass Casting Regulations the inquiry took place towards the end of 1907 and lasted six days—the manufacturers being represented by counsel; but in the case of the other regulations the inquiries were not held until the following year, when the manufacturers were represented by the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright). Further reference will be made as to the last two inquiries in a subsequent chapter, and for the moment it will be sufficient to say that in the case of all the trades considerable alterations were made in the regulations as a result of the efficacy of the manufacturers' opposition.

An announcement was received from the Board of Trade to the effect that the Argentine Tariff was about to undergo revision, and the Board asked the Chamber for a report. This was duly prepared at a Joint-Meeting of the Merchants Section and the Tariff Committee. Anomalies in classification and excessive duties already charged were specially referred to, and attention was called to certain Customs' regulations, the interpretation of which was by no means clear. Finally the Chamber pointed out to the Board of Trade the serious disadvantage cause by the existence of heavy taxes on commercial travellers, which were levied in each province, and which varied from comparatively small annual payments to £35 per annum in Buenos Aires, £52 10s. 0d. in Cordoba and Mendoza, £70 in Tucuman, and £147 in Salta.

Factory
Regulations.

Foreign
Customs'
Tariffs.

Shortly afterwards the Board of Trade submitted to the Chamber proposals made by the Brazilian Government for the amendment of their Customs' tariff. These proposals indicated very serious increases in duty, and the Chamber in its report pointed out that whilst on the one hand the higher duties would restrict British trade, on the other hand native interests would suffer because the increases were to be imposed on articles which were mainly used by the lower and middle classes. The attention of the Board of Trade was also called to the fact that the total taxes on commercial travellers visiting Brazil amounted to £330 per annum.

Income Tax.

A memorial was presented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stating that the Chamber viewed with grave concern the injurious effect on trade and industry of the prolonged maintenance, in time of peace, of the poundage of income tax at a war level; that the burden pressed with peculiar hardship on commercial and industrial undertakings upon which the prosperity of the country so largely depended; that the method of assessing the tax on profits arising from trade and industry was anomalous and inequitable, as the tax was levied on a sum which was higher than the actual profits earned; and *inter alia* that the Chamber would view favourably any proposals for broadening the basis of taxation on lines which, whilst lessening the burden on commerce and industry, would not be inimical to the general welfare and prosperity of the country.

Imprisonment of Debtors.

On the recommendation of the Retail Traders' Section the Council made a strong representation against the proposals that were being made in high quarters for the abolition of the Imprisonment of Debtors, and requested to be heard before any Committee or Commission that might be appointed to consider the subject. The Section pointed out in their report that the imprisonment of debtors for contempt of Court created no hardship as a creditor had to prove the possession of means before any judge would commit. They also emphasized the fact that trade was almost entirely based on credit; that any legislation which would deprive the creditor of his last resource would be detrimental to business, as the trader

would not be able to sell his goods on credit unless he had some means of enforcing payment by the dishonest debtor, and would, therefore, be unable to do so much business with the dealer. In like manner, it was stated, the trade of the dealer would be restricted because he would be unable to obtain credit from the merchant, and the merchant would be similarly affected in his relations with the manufacturer.

Much work fell to the lot of the Gun and Ammunition **Gun Trade.** Trade Section of the Chamber during 1907. As has been already stated a valuable concession was obtained in the case of the importation into India of .450 rifles. Among other questions which were dealt with was the admission into Australia of unproved arms, which subjected the English gunmaker to very severe competition, because it was illegal for him to export a fire-arm which had not been duly proved. It was suggested that provision should be made by legislation or otherwise that no arms should be imported into Australia unless they bore a recognised proof mark. Correspondence with regard to the matter took place between the Chamber and the Australian Government for a long time afterwards, extending into the next and following years, and, at the request of the latter, the Chamber furnished an exhaustive report as to the requirements of the Official Proof Houses in this and other countries. Finally the Australian Government found that they could not stipulate for an official proof, but they provided that a special duty of £5 per barrel should be levied on all arms which were not marked "tested," the meaning of the term to be that the test to which they were subjected was equal to that of a British Proof House. The attention of the Australian Government was also called to the fact that Belgian manufacturers of arms were using "Marques de Fabrique déposées en Belgique pour armes à Feu" which were likely to lead to deception. A few examples were furnished, viz. :—"The Vigilant," "The Puppy," "Climax," "Star," "The Perfect," "The Redoubtable," "The Dreadful," "The Victorious," "Crescent," "Rival," "Standard," "Club," "The Thunderer," "The Defender," "The Continental," "The Universal," "Prize Machine Gun," "The Perforator,"

"The Dexterous," "The Swift," "Stanley Arms Co.," "Twist Patent," "Southern Arms Co.," "The Little Enfield," "Acme Arms Co.," "Crescent Arms Co.," "Buffalo Dog." No fair-minded business man can have any doubt that these names (not a few of which were the names of British warships) were adopted to deceive the Australian purchasers, and it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the representation which was made to the Australian Government was couched in strong terms, especially in view of the fact that an Australian witness before a Commission appointed in the Colony said that Belgian guns branded with names in colourable imitation of those of British makers were being sold by thousands in the Commonwealth. The Gun and Ammunition Trade Section of the Chamber went so far as to denounce the practice of Belgian gunmakers as "dishonest," and there can be no doubt that as a result of the report and representations the Australian Government ordered a stricter supervision to be exercised over imported guns from Belgium.

**Government
Restrictions
on Trade.**

The General Purposes Committee, after careful inquiry and representation, presented a report, which the Council adopted unanimously, on the "Restrictions on Trade by Legislative or Administrative Action." It was stated in the report that there was abundant evidence to show that British trade of a legitimate character had suffered and was then suffering from interference by way of convention, legislation, prohibition, restriction, and regulation initiated and carried into effect without prior consultation with the interests concerned. The gun trade furnished a very prolific example, but the Committee were by no means confined to this to produce a case for drastic reform. They referred to the very wide statutory powers conferred upon Government Departments to issue orders, rules, and regulations, and instanced the regulations issued by the Home Office under the Factory Acts, which were drafted by officials who had very little, if any, practical knowledge of the conditions in regard to which they were legislating. Other examples were given which showed how seriously the national welfare was affected by the practice that prevailed, and the Chamber

expressed the firm opinion that it would be in the interests of the country if, before the initiation of commercial and industrial legislation and the issue of administrative regulations which were likely to cause considerable expense to manufacturers, or to hamper or restrict trade and industry, the Government Departments concerned were in all cases to enter into full consultation with representative bodies in the districts principally concerned. Copies of the report of the General Purposes Committee, together with the comments of the Council in support of it, were sent to the principal Government Departments.

Readers of this volume will have observed that for many years the Chamber had advocated the adoption of the Metric System of Weights and Measures. It is obvious from the reports of the proceedings of the Chamber that it had always been a matter of expressing a pious opinion, and that the question had not been considered from the point of view of adopting the metric to the compulsory exclusion of the English system. In 1907, however, the whole subject was considered by the General Purposes Committee, who presented a very exhaustive report, which the Council adopted. The report opened with an explanation of what was meant by the compulsory adoption of the metric system as set forth in a Bill introduced into Parliament, and the effect of which would have been to render the use of English weights and measures illegal except under very closely restricted circumstances. After a statement, showing the extent of the use of the metric system, the Committee pointed out that during the previous two or three years a change had come over the commercial and manufacturing community, an instance cited being that whilst in 1905 the Association of Chambers of Commerce had unanimously approved of the compulsory adoption of the system, in 1907 a resolution in its favour was lost on a show of hands, and only carried on a vote by Chambers by 40 votes to 38, which meant that no action could be taken. The General Purposes Committee found that the opinion of the commercial interests of the country was acutely divided on the subject of the compulsory change of system, and after a detailed review of the *pros.* and *cons.*, they stated that

The Metric
System.

they had come to the conclusion that the compulsory use of metric weights and measures would not be advantageous, and that in view of the opposition of the textile and engineering industries it would be unwise to press it. Whilst, however, expressing the opinion that the maintenance of the dual system was desirable, they urged that the metric system should be taught thoroughly in all elementary schools, technical schools and colleges, and every opportunity taken to familiarise workmen with its application. They also urged all traders, engaged in foreign trade, to make use of the system whenever it appeared to their interest to do so, and expressed the view that the commercial interests of the country would be much better served by gradual and voluntary adoption than by legislation of a compulsory character. It is significant that from the time this report was made public Parliament has been practically silent upon the question.

Birmingham
University.

In November, 1907, the Chemical and Allied Trades' Section held two meetings to consider whether it was desirable to create a Department of Applied Chemistry at the University of Birmingham. The Section reported to the Council that the question, as submitted, was so complicated and so many important manufacturing and industrial issues arose out of it, having regard to the variety of Birmingham trades, that, without definite information as to what was to be proposed, it was practically impossible to formulate any opinion or suggestion. If, however, it was intended to form such a Department, the Section were of opinion that it would be advisable that the subject should be considered from every point of view, including that of the manufacturer, and they offered to co-operate in any way that might be suggested.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

1908.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 17th and 18th March, 1908, the Chamber was represented by Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Cardiff on the 15th and 16th September, 1908, by Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Edmunds, George Shipway, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

At the Annual Meeting Mr. H. W. Edmunds, on behalf of the Chamber, moved a resolution to the effect that the powers of the Board of Trade in regard to matters arising between Railway Companies and Traders were inadequate, and should be increased by Section 31 of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1888) being amended and extended so as to empower the Board, in any case of complaint presented to them, and in which they might be unable to induce a Railway Company or Railway Companies to act in a way they considered to be reasonable, from time to time to embody in a Provisional Order or Orders such provisions as they might consider necessary to carry into effect any of their recommendations, and that the President of the Board should thereupon be empowered to procure a Bill to be introduced into either House of Parliament for an Act to confirm such Provisional Order or Orders in the manner prescribed by Section 24 of the said Act. As the President of the Board of Trade had shortly before that time appointed a Conference to consider matters comprised within the resolution, an attempt was made to induce the Chamber to withdraw the resolution, but this was not done, and after an interesting discussion it was carried, and it was decided to make a strong representation to the President of the Board of Trade on the matter.

Mr. J. S. Taylor at the same meeting moved a resolution to the effect that the incidence of the income tax was unequal, inasmuch as the tax pressed with

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

Board of
Trade and
Railways.

Income Tax.

peculiar hardship on commercial and industrial undertakings, and thereby restricted their proper development ; that the maintenance of the tax at a high level in time of peace was undesirable ; and that the Association was of opinion that the poundage should be considerably reduced with the view of reducing the then existing heavy burden and also to provide an adequate reserve for the raising of revenue in time of national emergency. The resolution was adopted, and the meeting decided to make a strong representation on the subject to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Govern-
ment and
Chambers of
Commerce.

Mr. Taylor also moved that having regard to the importance of the commercial and industrial interests of the country and to the serious hindrance which in the past had been and in the future might be caused by legislative or administrative action of a restrictive character, the Association would welcome closer communication between the various Departments of the Government and the Chambers of Commerce, by means of which legislative or administrative proposals might be considered in the interests of the mercantile and manufacturing community before their provisions were finally drafted. Mr. Taylor cited, as an instance of successful consultation with Chambers of Commerce, the Patents and Designs' Act (1907), and as an instance of the reverse action the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Bill, which, notwithstanding an unfavourable report by an Expert Committee, was introduced without any consultation, with the commercial interests concerned. He also cited Home Office Regulations under the Factory Act, all of which were launched without consultation, all of which were so strongly objected to in detail that public inquiries had been held ; and all of which had after impartial inquiry to be drastically altered, but not before manufacturers had been compelled to spend thousands of pounds in protecting their interests—most of which would probably have been saved if there had been prior consultations. Notwithstanding opposition raised by Manchester the resolution was carried by 55 votes to 25, and appropriate representations were ordered to be made to the various Government Departments.

At the Autumnal Meeting a Committee was appointed to take into consideration the restrictive laws relating to currency and banking in the United Kingdom, and their effect upon the trade and commerce of the country, and to report to the next meeting of the Association. Mr. J. S. Taylor (Birmingham) was appointed a member of this Committee.

Bank
Charter Act.

On behalf of the Chamber Mr. J. S. Taylor, at the Autumnal Meeting, moved :—

Direct
Payment of
Local Rates.

“That a memorial be presented to the President of the Local Government Board, urging upon him the desirability of appointing a Departmental Committee, or moving for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into and report upon the question of the direct payment of local rates by all householders.”

He pointed out how seriously local expenditure had increased, and quoted figures to the effect that between 1884—5 and 1904—5 there had been an increase of 180 per cent. in expenditure, whilst the increase of population had been only 28 per cent., and of the rateable value 40 per cent. In the opinion of the Birmingham Chamber, he said, it was not possible to stem the tide of local rates until measures were devised to bring home to every individual ratepayer the fact that the increase of local rates meant increased payment to the rate collector. The resolution was carried.

The present chapter cannot be passed over without a reference to the sterling work performed by the Chamber in regard to Imperial and Local Revenue and Expenditure. One report has already been referred to which gave a statistical review of the revenue and expenditure of the State and Local Authorities, but another report was subsequently published in which Local Revenue and Expenditure were analysed in detail, and many suggestions made for reform. Space does not admit of any further description of the report, but it ought to be said here that copies were circulated throughout the United Kingdom, and applications for further copies have since been made from all parts of the world.

Imperial and
Local
Expenditure.

Commercial
Legislation.

As has been previously stated in the course of this volume the Chamber performed no more important function than that of examining Bills introduced into Parliament. If there is one thing more than another about which the individual trader is ignorant or apparently indifferent it is that of legislative proposals, which may or may not affect him; but whatever may be the circumstances as regards the individual it is obvious that the matter is one for combined action. Thus the Chamber has always regarded it, and, as a result, the examination of prospective legislation has been undertaken seriously. For this purpose the Chamber has been long indebted to Mr. R. A. Pinsent—one of the foremost commercial lawyers of the city—who has acted as Chairman of the Commercial Bills' Committee, and has, in that capacity, rendered invaluable services to the commercial community. In 1908 no less than twenty-five Bills were examined and reported upon, and the Chamber took such action as was considered to be in the interests of the general welfare of the country.

Coal Mines
(Eight
Hours') Bill.

During the session of 1908 no Bill created so much comment as the Coal Mines (Eight Hours') Bill, the object of which was to limit the hours of work below ground in coal mines to eight per day, with certain exceptions. On the introduction of this Bill by the Government the Commercial Bills' Committee at once entered into consultation with large coal users, and considered various statistics, as a result of which they estimated that the adoption of the Bill would reduce the annual output of coal mines by from 10.27 per cent. to 13.72 per cent. (these percentages representing from 25,783,000 to 34,444,170 tons), and would also involve a permanent increase in the price of coal. It was, therefore, decided to petition both Houses of Parliament against the Bill, and to urge local members to vote against it. On the 5th March a deputation from Chambers of Commerce, on which Birmingham was represented by Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. A. E. Bond, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary), waited upon the Home Secretary (Mr. Gladstone), who agreed that an increase in price of even 9d. per ton would be unfortunate, whilst an increase

of 1/-, 1/6, or 2/- would be still more so. On the 22nd June a most important Conference of Chambers of Commerce was held at the offices of the London Chamber, when, on the eve of the second reading of the Bill, it was decided that if the Bill were passed into law it "must disastrously affect the industries of the whole country;" that there was no justification for a Bill which had been condemned with practical unanimity by the whole of the important commercial bodies of the country; and that members of Parliament should be urged to rise above political considerations and defend the country's commerce by offering relentless opposition to the Bill. The Birmingham Chamber was represented at this Conference by the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright), who was one of the speakers to the resolution. This did not, however, exhaust the Chamber's action, for at the Quarterly General Meeting of the Chamber, held on July 1st, it was resolved with one dissentient, that the Bill, if passed into law, would disastrously affect the industries of the country, whilst on the 14th December, 1908, an Emergency Conference of Chambers of Commerce was held in London, at which Birmingham was represented by Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. A. E. Bond, and Mr. J. S. Taylor (Chairman). This Conference unanimously recorded its "emphatic protest that in spite of the repeated warnings of experts and of the dissent of the whole commercial community in this country" the Government persisted in pressing the Bill. It was pointed out in the resolution that miners through their powerful unions could protect themselves and make arrangements as to hours of work sufficiently elastic to take into consideration the varying conditions of coal fields, which a rigid Act of Parliament could not do; that the Bill was restrictive of the liberty of the subject and would set a precedent for other branches of organised labour to follow; that the reduced hours of labour would involve an increase of price and thus adversely affect every manufacturer, increase the cost of living, and tend to lessen employment; and that the measure was an act of protection, at the expense of our own traders, and in favour of those foreign competitors who obtained their coal from sources not so seriously restricted by

statute. With certain slight modifications, including the permanent exclusion of the two windings, the Bill was passed into law; but it may now safely be said that, notwithstanding the modification secured, the opinions expressed by the Birmingham and other Chambers to the Government and to Parliament have been confirmed. This is a very clear instance of the need for Ministers to have regard to the views of commercial men. The Home Secretary (Mr. Gladstone), in the interview to which we have referred, plainly stated that if he had thought the effect of the Bill would be such as had been represented to him he would not have accepted responsibility for its introduction. It is now common knowledge that the effect has been worse than that anticipated by the Chamber of Commerce, whilst on the other hand the miners themselves have not been satisfied, because the benefit conferred upon them has been quite illusory.

Old Age
Pensions Bill

The Imperial and Local Finance Committee of the Chamber prepared and presented a very interesting report upon the Old Age Pensions Bills introduced by the Government. Whilst welcoming any reasonable provision that could be made by the State for the improvement of the condition of industrious workers in old age, they were of opinion that great care should be taken that the national characteristic of self-reliance and inducement to thrift should not be weakened, and that these would be best preserved by a contributory scheme. The Committee added, however, that as the House of Commons had definitely decided to accept a non-contributory scheme it would be futile to urge their alternative. They were, however, of opinion that as a maximum income limit of £26 5s. 0d. per annum had been prescribed, there should also be a minimum limit to, say £6 10s. 0d. per annum, or 2s. 6d. per week, as the adoption of this would not only not conflict with the non-contributory character of the scheme, but would operate as an incentive to thrift, whilst the possession of the minimum income would afford evidence that the old-age pensioner had done something to make provision for old age. Suggestions were then made for a sliding scale, with a maximum income of £36 8s. 0d. instead of £26 5s. 0d.—the pension to be 5s.

per week where the income was between 2/6 and 10/-, 4/- where the income was between 10/- and 11/- per week, 3/- where the income was from 11/- to 12/-, 2/- where the income was between 12/- and 13/-, and 1/- where it was between 13/- and 14/-. The Committee admitted that this scale would involve anomalies, but urged that there were greater anomalies in the Bill, *e.g.*, the man with an assured income of 10/- per week would receive a pension of 5/-, whilst a man with an income of 10/6 per week would receive no pension at all. Amendments were drafted to carry out these suggestions, and were sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the local members of Parliament, but, unfortunately, without avail.

It came to the knowledge of the Chamber that an Imperial edict had been issued in China ordering the establishment of an uniform system of weights and measures throughout the Chinese Empire; and information was received to the effect that an effort was to be made to induce China to adopt the metric system. Upon investigation the Chamber found that in the Chinese Customs' Tariff there were 748 items, of which 371 were reckoned by Chinese weights and measures, 120 by Chinese values, 113 by English weights and measures, 93 by 12 and powers of 12, 26 by powers of 10, 24 miscellaneous, and 1 by metric weights and measures; and that the value of the imports into China in Haikwan Taels for 1905 (the last year of which statistics were available) was:—British Empire, 277,343,000 Haikwan Taels; United States, 76,917,000 Haikwan Taels; Continent of Europe (except Russia), 31,596,000 Haikwan Taels; and Japan, 61,315,000 Haikwan Taels. They, therefore, urged upon the Foreign Office the great need for steps to be taken to protect British interests; and it is satisfactory to note that the metric system was not adopted.

In 1907, under the terms of a Treaty between the United States of America and Germany, the former agreed to accept as competent evidence Certificates of Value issued by German Chambers of Commerce, and steps were at once taken to induce the British Government to ask for similar recognition of the Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom. Early in 1908 it was announced

Chinese
Weights and
Measures.

United
States.
Certificates
of Value.

that this recognition was granted, and the Board of Trade intimated that they had nominated the Birmingham Chamber as a body competent to issue such certificates.

Telephone
Rates.

The National Telephone Company, with the approval of the Postmaster-General, had brought into operation a scale of measured service rates which were very carefully considered by the Council of the Chamber. A communication was, on the 10th February, addressed to the Postmaster-General stating that the Chamber approved of the adoption of a measured service system in principle, provided that in its application the following among other *desiderata* were secured, viz. :—that it did not impose unduly heavy charges upon users having two or more lines; that it did not involve the user having one line in heavier charges; that the limits of the Exchange areas for “flat rate” service were not restricted for measured rate service; and that an accurate system was provided for recording “effective” calls. It was added, however, that none of these *desiderata* was secured under the measured service rate and conditions, and that the latter were, therefore, open to very serious objections. It was pointed out that a subscriber who paid ten pounds per annum for unlimited service would, under the measured rates, pay the same sum for 1,800 calls, whilst the Secretary of the General Post Office, in giving evidence before the Select Committee on the Post Office Telephone Agreement (1905), had apparently accepted the view that 4,500 calls a year was a fair load for one line. Under the measured rates it was added 4,500 calls would cost £16 9s. 8d., an altogether excessive sum. Concluding a rather lengthy and exhaustive communication the Chamber said that they would consider no measured rates to be fair and just which did not provide for a fair load for each line—4,500 calls per annum—at a rate not exceeding that paid for unlimited service, and serious complaint was made as to the inefficient method of recording calls—the great weakness being, of course, that there was no indication at the subscriber’s end to show that a call had been recorded. This question was considered by the Association of Chambers of Commerce to be of such great importance that a Special Committee (of which the

Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce—Mr. G. Henry Wright—was appointed a member) was elected to conduct negotiations with the Postmaster-General and the National Telephone Co. The Committee during 1908 and the following years held many meetings and rendered much valuable service, which it was felt must inevitably involve considerable concessions to subscribers when the Postmaster-General arranged a new scale of rates and revised conditions as a result of the transfer of the undertaking of the National Telephone Company to the Government.

Early in 1908 the Retail Trades' Section reported that whilst certain traders had to pay from 2/3 to 2/6 per 1,000 cubic feet for gas for industrial operations, users of gas engines only paid from 1/7 to 1/10 per 1,000 cubic feet. As many firms had to use gas for heating (industrial) purposes, *e.g.*, tailors for heating their irons, japanners for heating their stoves, etc., it was held that they should have similar concessions to those granted for motive power purposes. A reply of a *non possumus* character was received from the Gas Department, and the Retail Trades' Section at once advised that a letter be sent in reply, and also that inquiries be made of the Electric Supply Department for particulars as to their charges for heating (industrial) purposes. All the information obtained was duly circulated, and it was ultimately decided, having regard to the apparently indifferent attitude of the Gas Department, to memorialise the City Council. In the following year (1909) a most important concession was obtained, and by their efforts in this connection alone the Retail Trades' Section established a legitimate claim on every trader using gas for other than motive power for lighting purposes.

Price of Gas
for Industrial
Purposes.

Serious complaint was made to the Chamber as to the action of the United States with reference to trade with the people in the Canal Zone of the Isthmian (Panama) Canal Co. under the Treaty of 1903 between the United States and Panama, which provided facilities for the construction and maintenance of the inter-oceanic canal, Panama granted, in perpetuity, the use of a zone five miles wide on each side of the canal route, and within this zone,

Trade with
Panama.

exclusive control for police, judicial, sanitary, and other purposes. A subsequent agreement was entered into under which the United States reserved the right to import supplies of all descriptions required for canal purposes and for the use of their employees free of all duties. The United States established Commissary Stores in order to avail themselves of the reserved right, but it was complained to the Chamber that general trade was being carried on free of duty so far as United States goods were concerned, to the serious detriment of British trade. A representation was made to the British Foreign Office on the matter and an inquiry was apparently made, for a reply was received setting forth the conditions then prevailing, and stating that the United States Authorities had issued a warning to employees to the effect that they would be instantly dismissed if they disposed of commissary coupons to "non-employees of the United States Government."

**Factory
Regulations.**

During the year the Council was very active in connection with Regulations issued under the Factory Act in regard to the generation, transformation, distribution, and use of electricity in factories; the tinning of metals with a mixture of tin; and dry grinding. The Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) represented the manufacturers of Birmingham and district at the inquiries subsequently held, and he was splendidly supported by the manufacturers concerned. It is gratifying to note that the action taken in both cases resulted in very valuable concessions being obtained—the result of which was that the cost to manufacturers of complying with the regulations was considerably reduced, and the annual expenditure on the upkeep of apparatus and appliances therefore diminished to the gratification of the trades concerned.

**Electric
Light
Charges.**

On the report of the Retail Trades' Section the Council considered the Corporation charges for electric current for lighting purposes, and made representations to the Electricity Committee in favour of a revised and more equitable scale and the abolition of meter rents. It is sufficient to add that the efforts of the Council were ultimately successful, and that the commercial community therefore received concessions which were greeted with much satisfaction.

Under the law of England and Wales the trader was (and is) unable to attempt to sell, exchange, or export fire-arms which had not been duly proved at a Proof-House established by statute. On the other hand fire-arms made abroad could be sent direct into Scotland and Ireland without any proof-mark—a privilege which was denied to the English gunmaker who could not sell his productions into Scotland or Ireland unless and until they had been proved. This had long been regarded as a hardship, and on the report of the Gun and Ammunition Trade Section of the Chamber a Bill was drafted to remedy this defect by requiring all fire-arms imported into Scotland and Ireland to bear a recognised proof-mark. This Bill was introduced into the House of Commons by the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., and has been reintroduced each session either by Mr. Collings or Mr. Amery. Up to the present it has not been passed into law, but much spade-work has been done for the purpose of furthering its progress, including a Conference at the Board of Trade and interviews with members of Parliament. Important Chambers of Commerce in Scotland and Ireland approved of the principle of the Bill, but certain members—one of them a member who either personally or through his constituency has no interest whatever in the matter—have made it their business to “block” the proposal notwithstanding the fact that the Board of Trade have no objection to its provisions. The Council have, however, not been daunted by these difficulties, and it is confidently hoped that their efforts, if persisted in, will lead to ultimate success.

Firearms’
(Scotland
and Ireland)
Bill.

On the 5th, 6th, and 7th May, 1908, the city was honoured by the presence of the Hon. Thomas Price, the Prime Minister of South Australia, and Mrs. Price, and their suite. They were the invited guests of the Chamber. Mr. Price was originally by trade a stone-mason who emigrated to South Australia, and he assisted, as an operative, in the erection of the Parliament House, in which he subsequently sat as Prime Minister. It is needless to add, therefore, that he was accorded a specially hearty welcome in an industrial city like Birmingham, which has witnessed the rise to eminence of so many men who

Visit of a
Colonial
Prime
Minister.

commenced in humble positions. During their stay Mr. and Mrs. Price were the guests of the Chairman of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Taylor) and Miss Taylor. Shortly after their arrival Mr. Price was driven to the Council House, where he was introduced to the City Council who were then sitting. After this ceremony the distinguished guests of the Chamber were entertained to a round of interesting visits to industrial establishments in the city and to other places of interest. Further interesting visits were paid on the following day, when there was also offered to Mr. and Mrs. Price a public luncheon, to which ladies were invited—a circumstance rather unusual with the Chamber of Commerce. The luncheon was presided over by Mr. Jesse Collings, and was honoured by the presence of the Lord Mayor. There was a large attendance, and in proposing the toast of "South Australia" Mr. Collings referred felicitously to the Prime Minister's interesting career before and from the time when he emigrated to South Australia with his wife and child until that time when he returned as the "first man" in the Colony of his adoption. Mr. Price replied in a speech of nearly an hour's duration, which was listened to with rapt attention by his hearers, who were deeply impressed with his wide grasp of affairs and his inherent statesmanship. The luncheon was followed by further industrial and other visits, and in the evening Mr. J. S. and Miss Taylor gave a reception in honour of the Chamber's distinguished guests, when over 300 ladies and gentlemen attended, representing the leading citizens of Birmingham. The following day was occupied by a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, and at its close Mr. and Mrs. Price and their suite left for London.

French Hall
Marks.

A proposal having been made to his Majesty's Government by M. Cambon (the French Ambassador) that the French official marks on gold and silver should be recognised here, and an inquiry being made of the Chamber by the British Foreign Office, a reply was sent to the effect that the Chamber could not advise the acceptance of the proposals. In the course of an exhaustive reply to the Foreign Office it was pointed out that the principal assertions made by M. Cambon were not accurate, and that the adoption of the proposals would be seriously detrimental to the value of the British Hall Marks.

The Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) was requested by the President of the Board of Trade to give evidence before the Railway Conference which he had called together, and which was representative of the Railway interests and presumably of the traders—although the representatives of the latter might have been much better chosen. The evidence desired was with regard to owners' risk conditions, and after consultation with the Standing Joint Committee of Midland Chambers of Commerce on Railway matters, and Mr. A. G. Hooper, M.P., who had introduced a Bill dealing with the subject the Secretary, on the 1st December, suggested that in the owners' risk agreement there should be inserted a proviso to the effect that misconduct should be presumed in the following cases:—(1) loss of the whole or part of a consignment—non-delivery for 14 days being regarded as loss; (2) loss of articles from a package under certain reasonable conditions which were defined; (3) damage to the extent of ten per cent. or more of the net invoice value of goods if the Railway Companies failed to prove the exercise of reasonable care; (4) damage to explosives and other dangerous goods unless the Railway Companies proved it to be due to the nature or quality of the goods; (5) damage to the extent of ten per cent. or more in cases where no reduced owners' risk rate was provided; (6) damage by wet unless the Companies proved that goods had been properly sheeted in all cases where a charge was included in the rate for covering; (7) misdelivery in cases where goods were fully addressed or bore a mark together with the name of the station of destination; (8) delay in the delivery of goods (not being perishable goods) addressed in the manner mentioned in the previous item, where loss was caused and the Railway Companies failed to prove the exercise of reasonable care; (9) delay in the delivery of goods consigned by passenger or goods train where the goods were rendered unmarketable or were too late for the market, provided that in the latter case the goods should be sold by the Railway Companies and the loss sustained divided between the Railway Company and the consignor or consignee. In the evidence, of course, all these points were elaborated, and in reporting to the

Council of the Chamber subsequently the Secretary said :
 " As the proceedings were private I am unable to report
 " the nature of the cross-examination to which I was
 " subjected, although I may say that no questions were
 " put by the Railway managers who were members of
 " the Conference."

Imprison-
 ment of
 Debtors.

During this year a Select Committee on Debtors (Imprisonment) was appointed, and the Retail Trades' Section prepared a memorandum of evidence, which was approved and adopted by the Council, the Secretary being authorised to present it. An application was made to the Select Committee for a hearing, and a reply was received to the effect that a witness could not be heard as evidence of a similar character had already been presented. The evidence proposed to be offered showed conclusively that it would be detrimental to the traders of the country to abolish the imprisonment of debtors as provided by existing law; the Chairman of the Select Committee was a known advocate of abolition; and evidence was received from many witnesses who were in favour of abolition. It was, therefore, natural the Chamber should feel that the inquiry, which was supposed to be an open and impartial one, was not as independent of partisan influences as it should have been.

Commercial
 Intelligence
 —Board of
 Trade.

In November, 1908, a letter was sent to the President of the Board of Trade urging him to consider the question of constituting the Chamber a Provincial Office of the Commercial Intelligence Branch of the Board for the collection and dissemination of commercial intelligence. The efficiency of the Commercial Intelligence Branch was fully admitted, but it was urged that by the adoption of the Chamber's suggestion a much wider circulation could be given to the information sent home by British Consuls and Trade Commissioners. For reasons which may readily be imagined, especially that of the inefficiency of so many Chambers of Commerce which might demand the same facilities, the Board of Trade found themselves unable to accept the Chamber's suggestion, and their commercial intelligence continues to be very inadequately distributed.

The Departmental Committee on Bankruptcy, before which Mr. Howard Heaton gave evidence on behalf of the Chamber, presented its report to the Board of Trade shortly after the middle of 1908, and it was at once carefully examined by the Bankruptcy Sub-Committee of the Chamber, who prepared and submitted to the Council the draft of a letter (which was adopted), addressed to the President of the Board of Trade, approving of the main principles of the Committee's report, but suggesting certain points upon which it was considered future legislation should be, at any rate partly, based. As is now well-known a Bankruptcy Law Amendment Act was passed in the year 1913, which contained many provisions of the greatest possible importance and advantage to traders, including not a few of those which had been suggested by the Chamber.

Legislative proposals were submitted to Parliament for an amendment of the law relating to Shop Hours. These were examined by the Retail Trades' Section, who advised the Council that they would oppose to the utmost any legislative proposals that might have for their object the fixing of the compulsory closing hours of shops ; that legislation should be based upon the principle of fixing the number of hours per week—leaving the arrangement of the closing hours to the shopkeepers themselves ; that the working week should consist of 64 hours ; and that any legislation that might be proposed should apply to all shops whether shop assistants were employed or not. Whilst submitting these suggestions a clear and succinct account was given of contingencies, which, it was held, should be specially provided for.

CHAPTER LXXX.

1909.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on March 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, 1909, the Chamber was represented by Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

Madrid
Arrange-
ment *re*
Marks of
Origin.

Mr. Taylor moved at this meeting that the Madrid arrangement for the repression of false indications of origin on goods was unsatisfactory, in that its efficacy was entirely dependent upon the internal laws of the countries adhering to it which were not uniform in their scope, and that his Majesty's Government should be urged to take steps to secure such amendments to the arrangement as might be necessary for making it effective. As an instance of the unequal application of the arrangement Mr. Taylor pointed out that whilst in this country the Customs had power to seize all goods bearing what appear to be false marks of origin, the French Customs, owing to the condition of their internal laws, had power only to seize goods bearing false marks of French origin, that is to say :—if a parcel of hats produced in Italy were consigned to the United Kingdom and marked "Paris made" the importation was prohibited, whilst if Germany sent into France goods marked "London made" the French Customs had no power to seize them. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Piracy of
Trade Marks

Mr. Taylor also moved a resolution to the following effect :—"That the attention of His Majesty's Government be called to the piracy of British trade marks, especially in the Argentine Republic and Japan, and that the Government be urged to consider what steps can be taken by international arrangements or otherwise for preventing its growth or continuance." In moving the resolution Mr. Taylor said that for some considerable time the commercial world had been literally ringing with complaints of the piracy of trade marks. In Japan several cases had been found of the piracy of marks belonging to members of the Chamber, and in each case it had been discovered

that the pirate had applied for a sole agency, and this having been refused had registered the mark and placed himself in a position to prevent the import of goods under the pirated mark except through himself. In the case of the Argentine Republic, he added, the Chamber had an instance of a gun manufacturer who could not send guns to that country if branded with the name of the firm concerned. Continuing, Mr. Taylor said he had reason to believe that in these cases there was collusion between the pirate and the lawyer representing him, and that the only person to suffer was in every case the trader. The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. H. W. Edmunds, at the same meeting, again moved a resolution with regard to the inadequate powers possessed by the Board of Trade with regard to classification rates and conditions. The resolution was carried.

Board of
Trade and
Railways.

The year 1909 was a memorable one for the Chamber in many respects, but it is desired in this paragraph to refer mainly to one important point. The year opened with a membership of 999, and closed with a membership of 1,096, as compared with one of 250 at the time of reorganisation in 1902. On many occasions previously the venerable President of the Chamber (the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.) had set up a membership of 1,000 as an ideal to be aimed at, and it is certain that no one was more pleased than he to see the ideal achieved. Not a few experienced commercial men have been surprised at the rapid progress, but, after all, the old adage that "work pays" is literally true. The Council of the Chamber and its officers had always worked, but since 1902 they had worked with greater persistency; they had worked with greater vigour; they had realised that nothing should be regarded as too small and nothing as too large to accomplish. Thus they had impressed the commercial community, and, as a result, had vastly improved their position and made the Chamber the third largest in the country. Since 1909, it may be stated incidentally, the ideal of 1,000 members has been parted with, and a new ideal, viz.: 2,000, set up—the actual membership at the time of writing (November, 1913) being over 1,600. With the

Membership
of the
Chamber.

membership naturally the work has grown enormously, and if this volume is to be kept within reasonable limits it will be still more necessary to reduce the number of subjects referred to. The interested reader, however; the member of the Chamber; or the student of commercial organisation, who desires to peruse a full record of the proceedings of the Chamber since 1903 will find the same in the columns of "The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Journal and Monthly Record."

**Commercial
Legislation.**

In the annual report for 1909 the Council called particular attention to the invaluable services rendered to the commercial and manufacturing community in watching proposals for legislation, adding that if it were not for the activity of Chambers of Commerce and other commercial bodies in this direction there would, undeniably, be great danger of injurious legislation passing through Parliament. It is, of course, only too true that legislative proposals of a character detrimental to commerce and industry do sometimes find their way on to the Statute Book, but these are as nothing compared to the proposals which are resisted because the Chambers of Commerce convince the Government or Parliament of their unreasonableness or injustice. In 1909 nine Bills were opposed, of which only one, viz. :—The Trade Boards' Bill, passed into law, but in this case representations were made to the Board of Trade and the House of Lords, which resulted in some of the most objectionable features of the Bill being removed. Three Bills were supported, but of these only one, viz. : the Cinematograph Bill, was passed into law. Seven other Bills, which did not seem likely to have any chance of passing into law, were carefully watched, so that the Council could at any moment have been in a position to take action in the interests of the community they were appointed to represent.

Royal Visit.

On the 7th July, 1909, H.M. King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra visited the city to open the new University Buildings at Bournbrook, and their Majesties graciously consented to receive an address from the Chamber as well as from the City and the University. This was the first time within the history of the Chamber

that the Chamber had been privileged, as a body, to address the reigning Sovereign. The address which was engrossed on vellum and bound in crimson leather, tooled with blue and sparsely decorated with gold ornaments, was presented to their Majesties by Mr. J. S. Taylor, the Chairman of the Chamber, who afterwards had the honour of being presented to their Majesties by the Lord Mayor. It is only fitting that in a volume of this description the wording of the address should be given *verbatim*, viz. :—

“The Humble Address of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, to Their Most Gracious Majesties King Edward VII. and Queen Alexandra.

“May it Please your Majesties,

“We, the Members of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, being representatives of all branches of Commerce and Industry in this City, humbly desire to offer your Majesties a loyal and dutiful welcome on the occasion of your Majesties’ gracious visit to open the New Buildings of the University of Birmingham.

“We humbly offer to Your Majesties an expression of the affectionate loyalty and attachment of the business community of this populous district to Your Majesties’ Throne and Persons.

“We avail ourselves of this opportunity of acknowledging with the deepest gratitude that the eminently wise, tactful, and unremitting labours of His Majesty in the cause of amity and goodwill among nations have earned the heartfelt thanks of the mercantile and manufacturing classes, whose vital interests, owing to the magnitude of their business transactions in all parts of the world are favourably affected by the friendly relations existing between the United Kingdom and foreign countries.

“We recall with pleasure the previous occasions on which Your Majesties, before ascending the throne, visited the City of Birmingham, and we gratefully recognise that Your Majesties’ present

visit is one more proof of the thoughtful interest Your Majesties have always evinced in institutions which contribute to the moral and material welfare of your people.

“The foundation of the University, which Your Majesties have graciously consented to honour by your presence to-day, has been heartily welcomed and supported by the mercantile and manufacturing classes. They realise that the wealth and prosperity of this great centre of production and the expansion of its varied activities are intimately bound up with the advancement and spread of higher education, not only in the Faculties of Arts, Sciences, and Medicine, but also in the Faculty of Commerce, which is specially directed to the training of our future leaders of commerce and captains of industry.

“We shall ever pray that Your Majesties’ beneficent rule may be long and glorious, bringing added lustre to your reign, and securing a continuance of peace and happiness for Your Majesties’ loyal and devoted subjects.

“Signed on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce this 7th day of July, 1909.

“Jesse Collings, President.

“J. S. Taylor, Chairman.

“H. W. Sambidge, Vice-Chairman.

“Samuel Allen, Hon. Treasurer.

“G. Henry Wright, Secretary.”

Their Majesties’ reply to the address was as follows:—

“The Queen and I are highly gratified at the cordial address of welcome which you have handed to us and at the loyal good wishes it contains.

“Famous throughout the world for its great industries, your city has for many years sent out its staple manufactures to eager purchasers in every quarter of the globe. The mighty factories for which the district is celebrated have provided livelihood for many thousands, and their products have everywhere enhanced the high reputation of the British

manufacturer and workmen. Machinery bearing the name of your city is always recognised as the best of its kind, and the industry and enterprise, which are the basis of the greatness of the Empire, are nowhere better exemplified than in Birmingham.

"I am deeply gratified that my efforts in the cause of peace have aided in the continuance of this prosperous and striking development.

"I am glad to learn that the commercial community have been faithful and generous supporters of the University. I feel assured that your expectations of advantages to be derived from the Faculty of Commerce in training the future captains of industry will be realised, and I trust that the industrial prosperity of Birmingham may continually increase."

An important question had been before the Council for some time with regard to the Merchandise Marks' Act. Many years previously an article had been patented, and the name applied to it was that of the inventor—a Birmingham man. For the particular article the name became well-known in many countries. The patent ultimately expired, and it was reported that almost immediately after its expiration goods were introduced from the Continent under the English name. It is not surprising that the Council of the Chamber considered this to be in the nature of unfair trading. A representation was thereupon made to the Board of Trade, in which the Council said that whilst it was admitted that an expired patent was open to the world, it was not right that the foreign producer should be allowed also to use the English name of the article unless it were qualified by an indication of foreign manufacture. The Secretary had a long interview with the Solicitor to the Board of Trade, and the opinion of the Law officers of the Crown was obtained, which did not satisfy the Chamber. The Council, after careful consideration of the matter, suggested that the Merchandise Marks' Act (1887) should be so amended as to provide that *inter alia* the term "false trade description" should include the application to any article manufactured wholly or partly outside the United Kingdom, or to the

shape, design, or other attribute thereof, of a name or description, including a name by which a patented article had become known, and which by custom of trade or user, had become distinctive or descriptive of an article produced within the United Kingdom, which might be designed, calculated or intended to mislead a purchaser into the belief that such article was manufactured in the United Kingdom, unless such name, description, or language was accompanied by a definite and prominent indication of the foreign origin thereof. Mr. W. Marshall Freeman, Mr. W. S. Tunbridge, and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) were authorised to prepare a Draft Bill for the desired amendment of the law and also to arrange for its introduction. This was done, and Mr. H. S. Staveley-Hill, M.P., subsequently introduced the Bill, which incorporated also the provisions of the Bill introduced the previous session by Sir C. E. Howard Vincent, M.P., for prescribing the use of the qualifying words "Not British" or "Colonial" for the words "Made in _____" which had for many years offered a gratuitous and valuable advertisement to the foreign manufacturer.

**Labour
Exchange**

A number of other questions in connection with the Merchandise Marks' Law was considered during the year, one of the most important of which was the facility with which foreigners were able to import "push buttons" for gloves, leggings, gaiters, etc., bearing the words "English make" without any indication of foreign origin. Vigorous representations were made to the Government, but ultimately it was announced that it was the settled practice of the British Customs to allow such articles to be imported by persons who, presumably, did so for the purpose of placing them on English-made gloves, the contention being that the words "English-make" referred to the gloves on which they were to be placed and not to the buttons themselves. The Chamber was utterly dissatisfied with this excuse on the part of the Customs, as they had good reason to believe that the buttons were freely placed on imported foreign gloves, and, furthermore, were of opinion that there was no means of checking the evil referred to, as the customs had no control of the articles once they had been cleared.

Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Sambidge, T. H. Ash, R. G. Evered, and Geo. Shipway, were appointed a Committee, with power to add to their number representatives of trade unions and others, to convene a Conference of local Chambers of Commerce and Workmen's Associations to consider the desirability of establishing a system of Labour Exchanges for the Birmingham and Midland Hardware District, with a Central Clearing House in Birmingham, and to take such other steps as might appear to be necessary or desirable with a view to accomplishing that end. At their first meeting the Committee co-opted Mr. Norman Chamberlain and Mr. J. R. Brooke (the latter being now a prominent official of the National Health Insurance Commission); invited the Birmingham Trades' Council to nominate five members for election on the Committee; and endeavoured to obtain the services of a few representatives of unorganised labour. This Committee was appointed with the object of assisting the President of the Board of Trade to carry out the objects of the Labour Exchanges Bill which he had introduced, and which followed very closely on the lines advocated by the Chamber (through the Secretary, Mr. G. Henry Wright) before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1906. As a result of the deliberations of the Committee the President of the Board of Trade was supplied with a memorandum, the details of which were afterwards very closely followed in the Government scheme. The operatives' representatives on the Committee agreed to every part of the memorandum except that of the attitude to be adopted by the Exchanges in cases of Strikes.

The year was a busy one in regard to regulations issued by the Home Office under the Factory and Workshop Act (1901) in regard to certain trades which the Secretary of State had certified to be dangerous. Public inquiries were held in regard to all of these and on each occasion the manufacturers (who were mainly, if not entirely, members of the Chamber) were represented by the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright). One of these codes of regulations related to the generation, transformation, distribution, and use of electrical energy

in factories, and in "The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Journal" for January, 1909, it was stated that these, like others previously issued, had failed to stand the test of publicity and impartial examination. The report of the Commissioner (the "Journal" added), furnished considerable evidence as to the inability of Home Office officials to realise what was either necessary, reasonable, or practicable. The public inquiry lasted ten days, and the expense to the manufacturers of the country could not have been less than £1,000 a day; but this was not all, because after three or four days' hearing the Home Office—apparently conscious of the utter weakness of its position—suggested a Conference of the representatives of the many parties concerned in the inquiry. This Conference lasted six days and resulted in practically every regulation being amended. The Commissioner (himself an expert on electrical matters) accepted the new draft with one or two exceptions, but in these cases he made the regulations less stringent than had been agreed upon between the Home Office and the parties. One of the most important amendments secured was obtained by persistent effort on the part of the Secretary of the Chamber, which converted the simple expression "danger" to "danger to life or limb," an amendment which it was afterwards explained to the Chamber by a competent authority meant the saving of many tens of thousands of pounds sterling to the manufacturers of the country. As drafted originally by the Home Office the regulations were extremely complicated, if not, as a whole, impracticable; but as finally settled after the public inquiry, although they were contained in 33 clauses, they could have been properly summed up in the words of the first clause to the effect that all apparatus and conductors should be sufficient in size and power for the work they were to be called upon to do and so constructed, installed, protected, worked, and maintained as to prevent danger so far as was reasonably practicable.

In the case of the regulations, with regard to the tinning of articles with a mixture of tin and lead, or lead alone, and which would have prohibited the use of any lead at all in the tinning of hollow-ware, the Secretary

(Mr. G. Henry Wright), as representing the manufacturers of Birmingham and the Black Country, was, with the aid of their practical and expert aid, able to save an important Midland industry from destruction. The Home Office were on this occasion represented by Mr. Raymond Asquith (the son of the Prime Minister), and on the last day of the inquiry, at the close of Mr. Wright's speech for the trade, in which he pointed out that the Home Office had absolutely failed to prove their case, the Commissioner inquired of Mr. Asquith if he still contended for the prohibitory regulation, seeing that all his witnesses had admitted (in response to cross-examination) that there had been a great improvement in the health of the workers since 1907. Mr. Asquith's reply being in the negative sense the Commissioner took the very unusual step of announcing (prior to the issue of his report) that he should report against the proposed regulation. Mr. Wright then entered a protest against any statement which would cast doubt upon the *bona fides* of any objection brought forward by the manufacturers, as he alleged had been done by Mr. Asquith in opening the case for the Home Office, and stated categorically that few people (if any) were more solicitous or anxious for the welfare of their workpeople than the employers. Many other alterations were made in the regulations as a result of the convincing evidence submitted by the manufacturers, and in his final report to the Council of the Chamber Mr. Wright submitted that "that the considerable alterations made in the draft regulations" not only justified "the strenuous opposition offered to them" but also demonstrated once again the necessity for the proceedings of the Factory Department of the Home Office to be carefully watched. "In this case" he added, "if it had not been for the vigilance of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the manufacturers concerned would never have been called together, and the inevitable result would have been that an important Black Country industry, viz. :—the manufacture of common tinned hollow-ware would have been killed by prohibition on the flimsiest possible evidence." Continuing, he said :—

“The relentless attitude of the Factory Department in this case is proved by the fact that when the case had been proved against them up to the hilt, and the Commissioner gave them a chance of gracefully withdrawing from the position they had taken up, they, through their counsel, expressed their inability to do so. Before this inquiry I should have hesitated to believe that the Home Office would have acted so unreasonably.”

Other Factory Regulations issued by the Home Office after an exhaustive public inquiry, in which the manufacturers were represented by the Secretary of the Chamber, were those with regard to the grinding of metals and the racing of grindstones. Reporting on the subject to the Council after the regulations had been settled, the Secretary stated that they would necessitate structural alterations or the provision of dust-removing appliances. He added that the draft regulations were settled by the Home Office in conference with the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, the Cutlery Company and the Sheffield Cutlery Council, and owed their origin to the heavy mortality among Sheffield grinders from phthisis. Information concerning the draft was not, however, communicated to the Chamber until an agreement had been arrived at with those concerned in Sheffield, and although a courteous request was made to the Home Office for a conference no reply was received. Having regard to their origin and to the fact that no evidence of grinders' phthisis in Birmingham was produced by the Home Office, local manufacturers, through their representative at the public inquiry, fought strenuously to confine the regulations to typical Sheffield industries. In parenthesis it may here be remarked that the Sheffield manufacturers had too easily succumbed to the persuasion of the Home Office—a fact which is proved by the action they found it necessary to take in the inquiry. Their attitude was, however, seriously discounted by their previous negotiations and settlements, and thus the burden of the opposition fell on Birmingham. The local effort was, however, eminently successful, and the final regulations were much more restricted in their scope

than the original proposals. As drafted they would have applied universally to all metal grinding; but, as ultimately issued, they were confined to cutlery and tools or cutting and piercing instruments of iron or steel, except the manufacture, repair, or sharpening of saws, tools, or instruments for use in machines for the cutting or working of metals or for use in the factory or for the purposes of the work thereof. The manufacture of pens, pins, needles, and fish hooks, were definitely excluded, and engineering and machine tool works, cycle, and motor manufactories and the tool rooms in all factories were not affected by the regulations as they would have been if the draft had not been opposed by the Chamber, and, it should be added, by the Engineering Employers' Federation. Not only was the scope of the regulations restricted so as to apply them only to processes of the Sheffield type but the common form of regulation as to an exhaust system was considerably modified for the first time since the enactment of the Factory Acts. Suggestions were made by the various parties which the Commissioner did not accept. In his report, however, he said :—

“ But I am impressed by Mr. Wright's argument that the variety of factories and of processes is such that no rule of general application, like a Secretary of State's order, can deal fairly with the special circumstances of every case, and I am prepared to recommend an amendment of Regulation I., which will make the exhaust system not the sole means of satisfying the requirements but the standard of what is required.”

As evidence of the strength of the case put by Birmingham against a cast-iron requirement of mechanical exhaust, the Commissioner, in his report, agreed that the latter had “ serious drawbacks and (that) it would be wrong to ignore the possibility that in exceptional cases other methods, now known or hereafter to be known, may prove equally effective and preferable in other respects.” The Chamber had arranged for the Commissioner to inspect a method of dust interception

by the "simple device of placing shallow pans of water underneath" the grinding wheels, and he reported in favour of this in cases where it was applicable—the regulations being amended accordingly. One of the draft regulations would have imposed on manufactures very burdensome conditions with regard to the racing of grindstones, but as a result of the strenuous objections made by the Chamber, backed up by expert evidence, the final requirements were so framed as to permit the continuance of the existing methods provided all other work was suspended during the "racing" and not resumed until the room was cleared of dust.

Although somewhat outside the scope of the present work, which is intended to be mainly a record of the decisions, actions, and labours of the Chamber, it may be permissible here to say that in regard to the three sets of regulations dealt with in the present chapter, the Chamber rendered to manufacturers services of inestimable value, and by so doing saved them the expenditure of many thousands of pounds which would have produced no benefit for the workpeople, but simply have added to the extraordinary powers possessed by the Factory Department of the Home Office to force manufacturers to carry out their unnecessary and oftentimes unreasonable and arbitrary requirements. The experience of the Chamber in connection with this matter had been such that the Brass White Metals' and Allied Trades' Section presented to the Council an exhaustive memorandum on the procedure for the making of Regulations for Dangerous Trades under Sections 79 to 81 of the Factory and Workshop Act (1901), and suggestions for its reform. In this memorandum it was asserted that the existing procedure caused the maximum amount of irritation, loss of time and expense; that draft regulations were prepared after "adventitious inquiries by men who had no practical knowledge" of the trade they were dealing with. Reference was made to the various sets of regulations to contest which the manufacturers had quite recently had to expend many thousands of pounds to protect their vital interests, and in all of which they had shown how impracticable and unreasonable many of

the Home Office suggestions were. In view of all this it was suggested that the existing procedure should be abolished and new legislation enacted which would provide for future regulations being decided upon by representative conferences, subject to the right of the Secretary of State to refer anyone or more disputed points to an arbitrator to be appointed by the Treasury. It would be interesting here to set out the whole of the Chamber's proposals, but space will not permit. The suggested reform did not, however, commend itself to the Home Office, and the only reason that can be assigned for its rejection is that it would have deprived the Factory Department of some of its arbitrary power.

At the request of the Board of Trade a comprehensive French
Customs'
Tariff. report was furnished to them in regard to the proposed new French Customs' Tariff. Speaking generally, it was stated in the report, the "base level of the duties proposed to be imposed" as compared with that of the existing tariff, had not been appreciably altered, but considerable and important modification had been made in the direction of a more minute classification of articles, the effect of which would be to raise the duties upon goods in the production of which more labour was involved. Many examples of this were quoted, and the Chamber concluded their report by pointing out that most of the articles upon which the duties were proposed to be increased were manufactured in France, and that this district would be detrimentally affected thereby to an important degree. They added that they were gravely concerned at the ever-increasing difficulties with which British manufacturers were from time to time confronted by higher foreign tariffs; that whilst it was true that, by the exercise of much skill and enterprise, the volume of British trade in the aggregate was maintained, a closer investigation into the "character" of the trade with countries whose tariffs were of a highly protective character would show that the maintenance of the aggregate volume of business was due to an increase in the export, not of finished but of partly raw and semi-manufactured articles upon which much less British labour had been expended than was previously the case.

In view of this the Chamber said they felt sure the Government would realise the seriousness of the situation. "especially at the present time (*i.e.*, 1909), when the country is passing through a period of severe depression in both the export and home trade, and when many thousands of skilled artisans are numbered among the unemployed." The Government were, therefore, earnestly urged to use their best efforts in negotiation with the French authorities to secure reductions in the proposed duties.

Price of Gas.

In March, 1909, the Chamber presented through Councillor J. G. Newey a memorial to the City Council, praying for a reduction of the price of gas supplied solely for the heating of irons and stoves in the operations of industry. A few months later the City Council, on the recommendation of the Gas Committee, reduced the price by 3d. per 1,000 cubic feet of gas used for heating purposes for japanning, lacquering, muffles, furnaces, stills, plating vats, blow pipes, soldering irons, ironing and pressing, and other like purposes, and it was estimated that the reduced charges would save manufacturers and other traders about £15,000 per annum.

Price of Electricity.

The Chamber also made representation to the Corporation as to the charges for electricity for ordinary and long-hour lighting, and it was subsequently reported that useful concessions had been made in both cases. In the case of long-hour lighting there was a reduction in every case, and in the case of ordinary lighting the reduction in the case of all consumers using over 1,000 units per quarter was as follows :—

	At Old Rate, per Quarter.	At New Rate, per Quarter.
1,100 units	£17 18 4	£16 0 10
2,000 "	31 0 10	29 3 4
4,000 "	60 4 2	58 6 8
6,000 "	89 7 6	75 0 0
8,000 "	118 10 10	100 0 0
10,000 "	147 14 2	104 3 4
20,000 "	293 10 10	166 13 4

Under the old scale of charges a higher price was charged in all cases for the first 300 units per quarter, but on the representation of the Chamber this was abolished.

In March, 1909, the Council, on the report of the Retail Shop Hours Trades' Section forwarded a memorandum on the subject of prospective legislation relating to the Closing Hours of Shops. They stated that they would oppose to the utmost any legislative proposals which might have for their object the fixing of compulsory hours for the closing of shops on the ground that such legislation would be seriously detrimental to the interests of shopkeepers. The reasons for this attitude having been fully set forth the Council proceeded to suggest that prospective legislation should be based on the principle of limiting the number of hours per week during which a shop should be opened, leaving the arrangement of the closing hours each day to the shopkeepers themselves, subject to the proviso that on one day at least in each week every shop should close not later than 2 p.m. To prevent abuse it was suggested that the hours should begin to count not later than 9 a.m. It was also suggested that the maximum number of hours during which a shop should be opened should be 64 per week, including meal times, and that the restriction should apply to all shops whether assistants were employed or not. Other suggestions were made, but the above sufficiently indicate the cardinal principles which were contended for and the adoption of which would, the Council believed, settle a difficult question in a satisfactory manner.

Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. H. W. Edmunds, and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) represented the Chamber on a deputation to the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Winston Churchill) to object to the Great Northern, Great Central, and Great Eastern Railways' Bill. Mr. Wright who was one of the appointed speakers, urged that if the Bill were to be passed into law the Board of Trade should secure the insertion of adequate guarantees for the continuance of existing routes, rates, and fares; the existing train service facilities; and the present "through" or shipping traffic; and also of a clause conferring power on the Board of Trade to deal with points of difference which might arise in the future between traders and the Companies. The Board of Trade secured the insertion of certain amendments by consent, but the

Railway
Amalgama-
tion and
Agreement.

Chamber and other commercial bodies regarded these as "entirely insufficient." In the House of Commons Mr. Alfred Mond obtained the passage of a further amendment which the Railway Companies objected to, and the latter thereupon withdrew the Bill.

A Departmental Committee on Railway Agreements and Amalgamations was subsequently appointed, and at a later date Mr. H. W. Edmunds gave evidence before this Committee to the effect that while the Chamber was not adverse to Railway agreements and amalgamations the Board of Trade should have full power to insist on proper safeguards and guarantees.

Firearms'
(Scotland
and Ireland)
Bill.

The Firearms' (Scotland and Ireland) Bill, which had been introduced in the previous session by the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., and the object of which was to prevent the sale of unproved arms in Scotland and Ireland, was again introduced, and the support of the London Gun Trade and important Chambers of Commerce in Ireland and Scotland was obtained. Being a private Bill, however, it was again crushed out in a crowded session.

Budget
Proposals.

On the day after the Budget was introduced its proposals were considered by the Imperial and Local Finance Committee, and on their recommendation the Council resolved:—"That an emphatic protest against the Budget proposals be forwarded to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the local members of Parliament on the following grounds:—(a) that the income tax is maintained at a war level in time of peace, and is, therefore, inimical to the best interests of the country; (b) that the proposed new direct taxes and modifications of existing direct taxation will add to the heavy and increasing burdens of the middle classes in general and the commercial community in particular, and will have a serious effect on employment and industry; (c) that the said taxes will fall mainly upon certain sections of the community leaving other sections practically free from increased burdens; and (d) that the difficulty of administering the new and modified taxes will increase the growing burden of officialism."

The Council considered the report of the Board of Trade Railway Conference, which had been convened by Mr. Lloyd George, and which consisted of representatives of the Railway Companies and also a number of gentlemen said to be representatives of the traders. It was decided that the recommendations of the Conference were utterly inadequate; that they would fail to remove ninety per cent. of existing grievances of traders; that their adoption would result in the creation of other grievances; and that they would involve the partial repeal of the Traders' Charter, viz., the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1894), which was deliberately enacted by Parliament for the special protection of the commercial community against the Railway monopoly. In view of this the Council urged upon the Board of Trade the need for an independent inquiry into the relations between the Railway Companies and the public. As is known at the time of writing an influential Royal Commission was appointed, with wide terms of reference, in October, 1913.

On the 29th July, 1909, the Chamber entertained nineteen distinguished members of the Imperial Ottoman Parliament, who were visiting this country, and who had been received by H.M. The King, and had also been the guests of the Government and other distinguished bodies. The deputation included some of the ablest and most noteworthy members of the Turkish Legislature, and their leader, Talaat Bey, was Vice-President of the Chamber and subsequently Minister of the Interior. Another of the visitors was Rouhi-al-Khalidy Bey—a lineal descendent of the famous Khalid, whom the prophet called the “Sword of God” and who conquered Syria from the Byzantines after he had vanquished the Persian Chosroes on the plains of Irak. The delegates were met at the Railway Station by Mr. J. S. Taylor (Chairman), Mr. H. W. Sambidge (Vice-Chairman), and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary), and after a short formal ceremony at the Queen's Hotel, were conducted in motor-cars to the Council House, where they were officially welcomed by the Deputy Lord Mayor, on behalf of the city, and by Mr. Taylor, on behalf of the Chamber. Their arrival was

Railways
and Traders.

Turkish
Parliamentary
Visit.

witnessed by an immense crowd, and as many of the visitors wore fez and some were attired in Eastern dress, the scene was a very interesting one. After the official ceremony Messrs. Taylor, Sambidge, and Wright, accompanied by interpreters, conducted the visitors to the works of the King's Norton Metal Co., Ltd., and the Birmingham Metal and Munitions Co., Ltd., where they were greatly impressed. A public luncheon was given in their honour at mid-day, when the toasts of "The King" and "The Sultan" were honoured, Mr. Taylor, in proposing the latter, saying :—"May the Turkish people have as good cause to revere their new Sultan as we have to revere our own Sovereign." The remaining toast was "The Delegates of the Imperial Ottoman Parliament," which was proposed by Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., and responded to by Ubeyd O'Allah Effendi and Dr. Riza Tewfik Bey. The afternoon was occupied by visits to the works of the Birmingham Small Arms Co., Ltd., and to Bournville, where the visitors were the guests of Mr. George Cadbury at tea. In the evening a complimentary dinner was given by Mr. T. A. Bayliss, J.P., at the Imperial Hotel. Shortly before their departure from England the following telegram was received :—

"To the Chairman, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.

"Before leaving the English shores I and my colleagues are anxious to thank you again for your hospitality, and to say how sensible we have been of the very cordial and sympathetic welcome which you have extended to us.—President of the Ottoman Parliamentary Deputation, Talaat."

Co-operative
Societies and
Income Tax.

On the report of the Retail Trades' Section the Council passed a resolution urging that Co-operative Societies should be assessed for income tax upon the same basis as other trades with whom they enter into competition, and appealed to the Government to introduce legislation with a view to the removal of the injustice caused by the present discrimination between co-operative and other trading concerns. It was pointed out that in

1907 the total sales of Industrial Co-operative Societies amounted to £109,000,000 and their share capital to £32,751,952; and that, in addition to the work of distribution, they were, through the Co-operative Wholesale Society, bankers, steamship owners, manufacturers, and merchants, the wholesale society alone employing over 14,000 hands.

During the year 1909 the Council rendered most important service to the city by reporting upon the Greater Birmingham Scheme. Careful inquiries were made of all the members of the Chamber as to their views, and these, having been collected, were summarised and considered by a Special Committee of the Chamber. Nearly 300 members replied, and as out of these 74.38% were in favour of the Scheme as a whole; 6.05% in favour of it with modifications, and 1.78% only against some particular part of it, the Council had no hesitation in approving of a report in favour of the Scheme. The report, which was of a most exhaustive character, and in which the arguments for and against were set forth clearly and forcibly, was adopted, with one dissentient, at a well-attended general meeting of the Chamber, at which the Lord Mayor (Sir Geo. H. Kenrick) was present. The Council were thereupon empowered to take such steps as might be deemed expedient with the view of supporting the Scheme and securing its adoption. Many thousands of copies of the report were printed and circulated, and a large number were handed to the Corporation at their request; and on behalf of the Chamber the Chairman (Mr. J. S. Taylor) gave evidence before the Local Government Board Inquiry, and Mr. Neville Chamberlain before the Parliamentary Committee on the Bill. Speaking of the contents of the report the Lord Mayor (Sir Geo. H. Kenrick) said:—

“He could only say that if the Committee (of the Chamber) had been briefed by the City Council they could not have done their work better. It was an admirable report in every respect.”

CHAPTER LXXXI.

1910.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 15th, 16th, and 17th, March, 1910, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Sambidge, Geo. Shipway, H. W. Edmunds, Wm. Pearce, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Leeds on September 20th and 21st, the delegates were Messrs. J. S. Taylor, H. W. Edmunds, Geo. Shipway, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

Canal
Develop-
ment.

On behalf of the Chamber Mr. George Shipway, at the Annual Meeting, moved:—

“That this Association approves generally of the recommendations contained in the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Canals and Inland Waterways; and that a letter be addressed to the President of the Board of Trade urging that at the earliest possible date steps be taken for carrying such recommendations into effect.”

Mr. Shipway pointed out that the recommendations of the Royal Commission were in accord with the deliberate and consistent policy of the Association. He traced the action taken by the Association, and said he had no doubt the Chambers would lend their whole weight to getting the Government to carry the recommendations into effect. Then the Manchester Chamber appealed for delay, notwithstanding the fact that in 1905 they were the movers of a resolution which was carried unanimously in favour of a scheme on all fours with that recommended by the Commission. Replying to Manchester Mr. Wright said that if five years previously such a resolution was passed they might very well pass a similar resolution in 1910 when they were supported by the report of a Royal Commission. He confessed he could not understand the mental attitude of the Manchester Chamber which five years previously moved the resolution referred to, and then, in 1910, having further powerful support

for the proposal, wished to have it deferred for six months "because they did not know enough about it." The resolution was carried.

Mr. H. W. Edmunds at the same meeting moved that a letter be addressed to the President of the Board of Trade, stating that the report of the recent Railway Conference of the Board of Trade was utterly inadequate; that many important questions were not even mentioned, especially the question of further powers being conferred upon the Board of Trade to deal with classification, rates, and conditions; that no real concession to the trading community had been recommended; and that an exhaustive inquiry into the many important questions that had been from time to time been raised between the Railway Companies and the traders should be held without delay. The resolution was carried.

Railways
and Traders.

At the same meeting the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) moved a resolution disagreeing with the proposals contained in the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on Shipping Rings with regard to the powers of the Board of Trade and the recognition of Chambers of Commerce as bodies capable of dealing with shipping conferences, and urging upon H.M. Government the desirability of accepting the recommendations contained in the Minority Report, as follows, viz. :—

Shipping
Rings.

"(a) That the Board of Trade should be free to recognise any Association which is in its judgment of an adequately representative character."

"(b) That the Board of Trade should be free to direct an inquiry with full powers as to taking evidence and the production of documents where it appears that important public interests (including those of consumers and producers) are affected by the action of shipping conferences."

The resolution was carried without discussion.

On the motion of Mr. Taylor the Association decided to urge upon the Government the desirability of steps being taken to induce the Governments of foreign countries and Colonies—where such taxes are in force—to remove the taxes imposed on British commercial travellers.

Commercial
Travellers'
Taxes.

Factory and
Workshop
Act, 1901.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association Mr. Wright moved, on behalf of the Chamber, that the provisions of the Factory and Workshop Act (1901) should be amended so as to provide that in the case of orders given by Factory Inspectors to fence machinery or to provide exhaust or other ventilation there should, in case of a difference of opinion between an Inspector and an occupier, be a form of appeal to an impartial and competent tribunal in lieu of the existing system of prosecution in Courts of Petty Sessions. In proposing the resolution he pointed out the unjust position in which the manufacturer was placed under the law, and gave many instances of real hardship, *e.g.*, if an Inspector ordered a guard to be placed on a particular machine and the employers view was that the guard was unnecessary, and if placed there would be likely to cause different kinds of accidents, the Inspector did not prosecute so that the case could be tried on its merits, but if an accident happened subsequently he would prosecute, and the only evidence he would need to give would be that if a guard had been placed on the machine the particular accident could not have happened. The Court would not be required to consider whether, had a guard been placed there, other accidents might have been caused thereby, and thus a conviction would be easily obtained. After an interesting debate the resolution was amended by providing that in case of a difference of opinion there should "be a hearing at a Court of Petty Sessions, when the magistrates shall be assisted by expert assessors." With this amendment the resolution was carried.

Merchandise
Marks' Bill.

Mr. Wright at the same meeting moved that the Association approve of the provisions of the Merchandise Marks' Bill, introduced by Mr. H. S. Staveley-Hill, M.P., and that a letter be addressed to the President of the Board of Trade urging him to advise His Majesty's Government to adopt a Bill or to grant facilities for its enactment during the next session of Parliament. The object of the Bill, which had been drafted by the Birmingham Chamber, was (1) to remedy a defect in the law which enabled a foreign manufacturer, on the expiration of a British patent, to make use, for the purpose of

describing his goods if made according to the specification of the expired patent, of any name by which the patented article had become known, even though that name was a distinct indication of British origin; and (2) to substitute the qualification "Not British" for the definite indication of origin, *e.g.*, "Made in Germany," which was then required by law. The resolution was carried unanimously.

During the session fifteen Commercial Bills Commercial
Legislation. introduced into Parliament were carefully examined, and action taken with regard to certain of them—the remainder being closely watched so that if the necessity had arisen action could at once have been taken. Much activity was shown with regard to the Shop Hours' Bill which the Government proposed to introduce. From an examination of the details it was apparent that a number of the objectionable features which had appeared in the previous Bill had been removed, and also that certain amendments had been made which carried out the suggestions furnished to the Home Secretary by the Chamber. The Retail Trades' Section were not, however, satisfied as to the reasonableness of some of the proposals, and upon their recommendation an exhaustive memorandum prepared by the Secretary was transmitted to the Home Secretary, with a request that he would consider the further amendment of the Bill. Viscount Morpeth, M.P., again introduced the Firearms' (Scotland and Ireland) Bill, but as the session of 1910 was practically a blank one this, with many other Bills, had to be dropped, as did also the Merchandise Marks' Bill, prepared by the Chamber, and which was reintroduced by Mr. H. S. Staveley-Hill.

Early in 1910 the Port of London Authority promoted a Provisional Order which, subject to certain exemptions and rebates, proposed to fix maximum import and export rates on goods imported into and exported from the Port of London. An inquiry into the draft of the Provisional Order was opened in London by Lord St. Aldwyn on the 24th February, and in view of the fact that extra dues would be levied on all goods sent to or from the Port of London by rail, whilst all transshipment goods, including those conveyed to and from London coastwise, would be Port of
London
Rates.

exempted, the Chamber felt that the matter was a very serious one for Midland traders who would have to pay the extra rates whilst their foreign competitors and all traders established on the seaboard in this country, who would have sea communication, would be free from the additional burden, and would thus, in effect, not be called upon to contribute to the cost of increased facilities and improvements provided by the Port authority, although they would have the full enjoyment of them. The Secretary therefore attended the Public Inquiry, and gave evidence under the auspices of the Great Western Railway Company, in which he objected to the unfair discrimination between traffic carried by rail or canal and by sea respectively for export, adding that the Chamber thought it most important that if additional dues were to be put upon traffic carried to the Port by rail they should also be put on traffic carried by coastwise steamer. Cross-examined by Mr. J. D. Fitzgerald, K.C. for the Port Authority, who asked, "But what about foreign traffic?" the Secretary replied "So far as I am concerned I should like to see similar dues charged on all foreign traffic transhipped in London." Pressed by Mr. Fitzgerald on certain exceptional cases, he retorted, "I have already answered that so far as my views are concerned all traffic which has the facilities of the Port of London should be treated in the same way," pointing out that the railway rate from Birmingham to London was higher than the freight from Antwerp to London, but that as the Provisional Order stood the Birmingham traffic must pay the dues and the Antwerp traffic be exempt; furthermore, he continued, as coastwise traffic was also exempt, the Midland manufacturer was confronted by two preferences, viz., one given to the foreigner and one to the competitor on the seaboard. It was pointed out to him that the Port of London Act stipulated that in any Provisional Order provision should be made for exempting goods imported for transhipment only, but he answered that it also provided that the Provisional Order might "determine what goods are for the purposes of such exemption to be treated as goods for transhipment only," and that whilst he realised that the effect of this was to secure exemption for foreign tran-

shipment traffic, he "declined to assume that it necessarily applied to coastwise traffic." Lord St. Aldwyn decided he could not limit the exemption to foreign traffic, but after a protracted inquiry he reduced the proposed maximum rates by nearly 40 per cent. It should be stated here that there were many objections besides that of Birmingham, including the Corporation of London, the London County Council, the London Chamber of Commerce, and many other Associations, but the Birmingham and Midland case was the principal one in regard to the discrimination against rail and canal-borne traffic. Whilst gratified with the reduction of the maximum rates, the Council felt it was necessary still further to contest the obnoxious provisions with regard to coastwise traffic, and a Conference of Midland Local Authorities and Chambers of Commerce was therefore convened by the Chamber, and held on the 4th July. The President of the Chamber (Mr. J. S. Taylor) presided, and there were present Municipal and Chamber of Commerce representatives from a number of Midland towns, when it was unanimously decided to raise funds for the purpose of contesting the confirmatory Bill before the Parliamentary Committee. The Town Clerks of Wolverhampton and Walsall and the Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce of Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton were appointed a Committee, with power to add to their number, to take such steps as might be necessary, including the briefing of counsel, and the selection of witnesses to appear before the Select Committee. Immediately after the Conference the Committee decided to retain Mr. Ram, K.C., and Mr. W. Marshall Freeman as counsel for the Midland Authorities and Chambers of Commerce who had lodged petitions against the Bill. The first witness called for the Midland opposition was Mr. G. Henry Wright (the Secretary of the Chamber), who, in the course of his evidence, said they did not object to the levying of additional port rates *per se*, but that they did strongly object to the whole of them being paid by inland traders. Cross-examined by Mr. Vesey Knox, K.C., at some length, who suggested that the Chamber took action on the initiative of the Railway

Companies, the witness said :—The Chamber always acts on its own initiative so far as its action is concerned, but that “like most bodies we receive our information from various quarters.” Other witnesses called on the joint petitions were Mr. T. B. Adams, J.P. (Wolverhampton), Mr. W. Hall Jones (Wolverhampton), Mr. F. W. Cook, J.P. (Dudley), and Mr. John Williams (Walsall). After the counsel and witnesses of all petitioners, including the Railway Companies, had been heard the Select Committee decided they could not remove the exemption of coastwise traffic, as they were bound by the Port of London Act (1908). The Midland Local Authorities and Chambers of Commerce were not, however, in a mood to accept this rebuff silently, and a meeting of Midland members of Parliament was held a few days after the decision of the Select Committee, when the consideration of the Provisional Order Bill as amended was to come up for the third reading. Mr. G. R. Thorne, M.P. (Wolverhampton), at the instance of the Midland petitioners, moved an amendment, the effect of which would have been to place coastwise traffic sent to London for export on the same terms as exports from the Midlands. The speaker ruled this out of order, and Mr. Walter M'Laren, M.P., moved that the debate be adjourned. This was seconded by Mr. Thorne in an eloquent speech, to which the President of the Board of Trade replied by asking the House to reject the motion for adjournment. Mr. Ernest Pollock, K.C., supported the motion, as did also Sir Courtenay Warner, M.P., Sir F. Banbury, M.P., Mr. McCurdy, M.P., Colonel Hickman, M.P., and Mr. Stuart Wortley. Before asking the House to reject the motion the President of the Board of Trade had had a whispered consultation with the Chief Treasury Whip, but as the tide of opposition swelled on both sides the Master of Elibank sent out a junior whip as a scout to make inquiries. When he returned and passed a paper to his chief on which certain calculations appeared to be written it became evident that the Government were in serious danger of defeat if the President of the Board of Trade remained obstinate, and somewhat ungraciously he rose and with regret accepted the motion for adjourn-

ment. The "Birmingham Daily Post" referred to the incident as a "gallant fight" which "had a decided and almost dramatic success," and continued that "the grim humour of the situation was heightened by the fact the Ministers were so confident of carrying the third reading that they had secured that the House of Lords should on the same evening adjourn till eleven o'clock in order to receive the Bill from the Commons, give it a first reading, and so hurry it along. The President of the Board of Trade, however, was so anxious to thrust the Bill forward that he put it down for the 21st July—two days after the adjournment. On the 20th he received in his room a small deputation, including Mr. G. R. Thorne, M.P., Mr. Ernest Pollock, K.C., M.P., Mr. Ebenezer Parkes, M.P., and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary of the Birmingham Chamber). There were also present Sir Owen Phillips, Lord Ritchie, of Dundee, and other members of the Port of London Authority. The interview lasted three-quarters of an hour, and the case for the Midlands was very strenuously pressed. Shortly afterwards a reason memorandum was drawn up by the Parliamentary Agents of the Chamber and other Midland petitioners (Messrs. Sharpe, Pritchard and Co.) and sent to every member of the House of Commons; and before the order for the third reading was reached on the following day a letter was received from Lord Ritchie, of Dundee, as representing the Port Authority, stating that the acceptance of the suggestions of the Midlands would result in largely diverting trade from the Port of London to foreign ports. He added, however, that the Port Authority had had their attention drawn to the position of the Midland traders and to the apprehension expressed that the proposed rates would materially injure their trade; and that they were, therefore, prepared—before the rates were actually imposed and subsequently—to consider sympathetically any and all cases of alleged hardship which may be put before them. They would, he continued, consider them with a view of seeing whether any, and what, modifications of, or possibly exemption from, rates (the rates in the Bill being, of course, maximum rates only) would be just and advisable in the interests

both of the traders and of the Port Authority. In order to make it clear that such action could be adopted they would agree, before the House of Lords' Committee, to add after the words "entrepôt trade" on page 4, line 29, of the Bill the words "or any other trade." On the third reading of the Bill, Mr. Thorne (who, notwithstanding the fact that he sat on the Government side of the House, fought with the utmost courage against the position taken up by the President of the Board of Trade) said that what was offered to the Midland traders was not what they desired; that whilst they were not at all satisfied they felt that in view of the provisions of the Port of London Act of 1908 they could not achieve more at the moment; but that their acceptance of the offer on behalf of the Port Authority (an offer, may the writer add in parenthesis, which had been literally wrung from them by the fact that the House of Commons were unconvinced as to the justice of their cause) did not commit them in the slightest degree, and that the traders would be perfectly free in the future to take such steps as they thought fit if they considered that their interests were jeopardised. Other members for Midland constituencies, including Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., followed in a similar vein, and ultimately the third reading of the Bill was agreed to without a division. There need be no hesitation in saying that in this dramatic struggle the Chamber and the Local Authorities and Chambers who joined with them, rendered services of an invaluable character to Midland trades and industries, and the writer would add, that if during the whole year the Chamber had accomplished no other work, this alone would have more than justified its existence. Their task, however, was not yet completed. They had yet to avail themselves of the offer of the Port of London Authority and to accomplish this an application was, on the 27th September, presented to the Authority by the Corporations of Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, and the Chambers of Commerce of Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall, and Wolverhampton for certain exemptions and rebates in pursuance of the Act. The application which was drawn up by the Birmingham Chamber, who

had, it should be stated, also been responsible for most of the actual work which had been done in regard to the Bill, asked for exemption from the Port Rates of all goods exported to parts beyond the seas or coastwise, or, as an alternative, (1) the exemption from such rates of the following articles, viz.:—iron and steel and manufactures thereof; other metals and manufactures thereof; cutlery, hardware, implements, and instruments; electrical goods and apparatus; machinery; railway carriages and trucks; leather and manufactures thereof; and motor cars and cycles; and (2) a rebate of so much of the Port Rates proposed to be charged on the following articles when exported to places beyond the seas, or coastwise, as would provide that the rates charged thereon should not exceed 25% of the amount of the maximum rates for exports, viz.:—manufactures of wood and timber; carpets and carpet rugs; apparel; chemicals, drugs, dyes, paints, and colours; earthenware and glass; paper; brooms and brushes; candles; rubber and manufactures thereof; hemp, cordage, cables, rope, twine, etc.; soap; sauces, pickles, and vinegar. In this application the special circumstances relating to Midland industries in regard to the heavy charges for freight, both on their raw materials and the finished products, were fully explained, and the Port Authority were also reminded that the Bill for the Port of London Act (1908), as deposited, did not contain the objectionable provision as to the exemption of coastwise traffic, which was inserted suddenly and without notice after the Bill had been before the Joint Committee for a considerable period. Consequently, it was argued, no accusation of negligence could reasonably lie against the applicants. It was not desired to make any complaint as to the benefits seaboard manufacturers acquired as a result of their geographical position, but serious complaint was made against “any proposal by a public authority to augment these benefits at the expense and to the disadvantage of traders not so favourably situated.” In the application it was added that even if the total exemption of all exports was conceded inland traders would still be under the serious disadvantage of having to pay, upon their raw

materials and other goods imported, rates from which their competitors on the seaboard would be absolutely free. Continuing, the applicants observed that on the third reading of the Bill Sir Luke White, M.P., who was the Chairman of the Select Committee of the House of Commons said :—"We as a Committee did not come to the conclusion to decide this case upon the merits of the Midland trades," and also that the only body which had ever pretended to consider the whole of the Midland case on its merits was the Royal Commission on the Port of London, appointed in 1900, and who, in 1902, reported as follows :—

"There should not, in our opinion, be dues upon export goods, nor upon goods which merely enter the Port for transhipment and re-exportation. The exemptions made at Liverpool in respect of such classes of goods would probably afford a useful model when modified so as to suit the conditions of London."

It would have been impossible to find a better reason than this for the Midland case, and it was therefore submitted that the justice of the position could only be adequately met by an amendment of the Port of London Act (1908), so as to bring it into conformity with the Liverpool practice, but that in the meantime it was urged that irreparable injury to Midland trades could only be avoided by the granting of total exemption to all exports, and that failing that the injury could be somewhat minimised by conceding the alternative referred to above.

As a result of this application a Conference took place with Lord Devonport (Chairman) and other members of the Port of London Authority on the 11th October, 1910, when there were present representatives of all the applicants, including Messrs. J. S. Taylor, E. Parkes, M.P., and G. Henry Wright (Birmingham), Mr. G. R. Thorne, M.P. (Wolverhampton), and Mr. R. A. Cooper, M.P. (Walsall), the Mayor of Walsall, the Town Clerk of Wolverhampton, and others. After a long discussion, Lord Devonport asked whether the deputation would be prepared to accept a suggestion that the actual rates on exports should be only 50 per cent. of the maximum, it

being also understood that the Port Authority would be prepared from time to time to consider on its merits any case where the payment of new rates made it difficult to maintain any particular trade. After a private consultation the deputation accepted the suggestion, reserving to themselves, however, their rights in regard to the question of differential treatment of coastwise transshipment traffic. It will be remembered that the maximum rates originally proposed had, as a result of the strenuous opposition at Lord St. Aldwyn's Inquiry, been reduced by 40%, whilst the additional concession which had been literally wrested from the Authority by the traders' opposition, represented a reduction of 50% on the new maxima. Commenting upon the total result of the action taken, the "Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Journal" said :—

"Although we cannot be expected to remain satisfied until transshipment traffic using the Port of London is made to pay its proper share of the cost of the increased facilities which are about to be provided, we think that Midland traders have every reason to congratulate themselves on the concession which their representative bodies, have by dint of hard and vigorous work, secured for them. The total value of the concessions—that is to say, the difference between the amount which would have had to be paid if the maximum rates had been enforced and the amount which will now have to be paid—will probably be found to be somewhere in the region of £50,000 per annum; but whatever the amount may be it will represent the saving obtained."

The total costs of the opposition to the joint Midland petitioners were estimated to be not less than £1,000, of which Parliamentary costs alone amounted to £634. Of the latter sum the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce provided £317, the remaining expenses amounting to about £150. Clearly, owing to the very strenuousness of the opposition, Midland traders got good value for the money, although all their demands were not conceded, and there need be no hesitation in saying that of all the work which

the Chamber has done during the century of its existence, the opposition to the Port of London Rates furnishes one of the brightest examples.

Anglo-
Portugese
Trade.

The attention of the Foreign Office was called to the Treaty concluded between Portugal and Germany, in pursuance of which Germany was accorded duties on a much lower level than those charged for similar goods of British manufacture. It was, therefore, urged that His Majesty's Government should endeavour to negotiate a Commercial Treaty with Portugal, which would, at any rate, provide for most-favoured nation treatment for British products. For various reasons which might be dilated upon if space permitted such a Treaty has not yet been concluded.

Thefts of
Metal.

In January, 1910, the Chairman of the Brass White Metals' and Allied Trades' Section (Mr. J. W. Earle) and the Secretary of the Chamber (Mr. G. Henry Wright) were appointed to represent the Council at a Conference convened by the Birmingham and District Engineering Trade Employers' Association, to be held on the 16th February, to consider what steps could be taken to promote new legislation, having for its object the prevention of the theft of metal. As a result of the Conference it was decided to arrange for the introduction of a Bill after the views of all parties to the Conference had been considered. The Bill, however, made no progress, and the Council in December, 1910, again took up the consideration of the matter on the report of the General Purposes Committee, who stated that legislation was urgently required. They pointed out that under the general law the police were obliged to prove unlawful possession of goods believed to have been stolen before they could take any effective action; but that in certain cities and towns, including London, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Salford, Oldham, Birkenhead, and Bootle powers were conferred upon the police by local Acts, under which a person taken before a magistrate charged with having in his possession, or conveying in any manner anything which might be reasonably suspected of being stolen or unlawfully obtained, and who could not give an account to the satisfaction of such magistrate as to how he came

by the goods, was to be deemed to be guilty of a misdemeanour, and liable to a penalty of £5 or to imprisonment with or without hard labour for two months. Continuing the report the General Purposes Committee said that the absence of these powers in other parts of the country (including Birmingham) made it practically impossible to arrest suspected thieves or receivers, unless the police had legal proof of unlawful possession, and they therefore recommended that arrangements be made for a Bill to be introduced giving a general power to the police throughout the country similar to that conferred upon the police in the cities and towns previously mentioned. A considerable amount of support to this proposal was subsequently obtained as a result of a resolution moved by Birmingham and passed by the Association of Chambers of Commerce, but up to the time of writing (1913) it has not been found possible, owing to the congested condition of Parliamentary business, to get a Bill introduced with any prospect of success. By steady perseverance, however, the desired end will undoubtedly be attained sooner or later.

At the request of the Board of Trade the proposed new Customs' Tariff of Japan was examined, and a report upon it prepared and forwarded to the Government. As had been the case for many years in regard to new foreign tariffs the Chamber found that considerable increases in the duties were proposed. Japanese
Customs'
Tariff.

A similar investigation was undertaken, at the request of the Board of Trade, into the proposed new Swedish Customs' Tariff, and here again it was found that many increases of duty were suggested. In both this and the case of the Japanese Tariff appropriate representations were made to the Government. Swedish
Customs'
Tariff.

On the 11th May, 1910, a special meeting of the Council was held, at which the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P. (the Hon. President of the Chamber) moved the following resolution :— Death of
King
Edward VII.

“That the Council of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, in the name and on behalf of the members, record their deep sorrow at the calamity sustained by the nation in the decease of our late Sovereign, King

Edward VII., and tender to his Most Gracious Majesty the King, Queen Mary, the Dowager Queen Alexandra, and the members of the Royal Family, heartfelt sympathy in their sad bereavement and the irreparable loss they have sustained; and that the Council humbly offer to his Most Gracious Majesty King George V. their sincere congratulations upon his accession to the throne, and assure His Majesty of their affectionate loyalty and devotion."

This solemn vote was moved by the revered Hon. President of the Chamber in an appropriate and pathetic speech, during which he referred to the tender solicitude of Queen Alexandra, who, during the recent time he lay ill as a result of an accident, sent her chief officer three times to Gower Street, London, to inquire as to his condition. Seconded by Mr. J. S. Taylor (the President of the Chamber), the vote was carried in silence by the members standing in their places. The thanks of His Majesty King George and Queen Alexandra for the vote were subsequently forwarded to the Chamber by the Home Secretary.

United
States
Control of
Canadian
Trade.

In May, 1910, the Chamber addressed to the President of the Board of Trade a strong representation urging that immediate inquiries be made into complaints lodged by members as to the alleged United States control of Canadian Trade through the medium of the Underwriters' laboratories in Chicago, by whom samples of many descriptions of goods imported into Canada had to be tested before the goods themselves could be fitted into buildings with the approval of the Fire Insurance Companies, who were parties to national Board of Fire Underwriters established in the United States, to which all the principal British Companies belonged. Evidence was laid before the Council and by them forwarded to the Board of Trade, which inevitably led to the conclusion that British traders were not and could not be fairly treated as compared with United States' manufacturers, to whom many facilities in regard to the laboratories in Chicago were available. The President of the Board of Trade was urged to institute close inquiries into the matter in Canada, but up to the time of writing (1913) no reports have been communicated to the Chamber, although the

Council has good reason to believe that exhaustive documents have been furnished to the Government. It is satisfactory, however, to observe that since the representations were made the volume of complaint to the Chamber has been considerably reduced.

The Council considered about the middle of the year the new Owners' Risk Agreement, which had been presented by the Railway Companies as a result of the proceedings of the Board of Trade Railway Conference. Being entirely dissatisfied by these the Council consented to the Railway Rates' Committee having a meeting with the District Goods' Managers. This duly took place, but at its close the Railway Rates' Committee decided that they were

Railway
Rates—
Owners'
Risk.

“unable to recommend traders to sign an agreement which has no advantages over, and may be interpreted so as to be more disadvantageous than, the present agreement.”

The Budget proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer having been carefully examined, upon the report of the Imperial and Local Finance Committee the Council again expressed their regret that it was proposed to maintain the income tax at a war level in time of peace, thus depriving the country of a safe reserve in the event of national emergency arising. The Council also decided to object to the proposal to charge to the Local Authorities one-half of the cost of removing the pauper disqualification in regard to Old Age Pensions, and quoted the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Mansion House Banquet on the 15th July, 1910, in which he said that the practice of making grants to local taxation was a wasteful way of giving relief and encouraged local extravagance, and that it was a bad principle to divorce responsibility for expenditure from the responsibility of raising the money. It was also urged upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he should insert a clause in the Finance Act providing that full stamp duties should be levied on all gambling deals in stocks and shares in the same way that such duties were levied on actual transfers.

Budget
Proposals.

On the 24th October, 1910, an important Conference, convened by the Chamber of representatives of the

Retail
Trades'
Conference.

principal Retail Trades' Associations in the Midland district was held in Birmingham, at which the proposals of the Chamber for the Amendment of the Shops' Bill, introduced by the Government, were approved. Other questions discussed at this most useful and interesting meeting were (1) Co-operative Societies and Income Tax ; (2) Swine Fever Regulations ; (3) Proprietary Clothing Clubs, and (4) the Proposed Limitation of the Hours of Work in Bakehouses to 48 per week.

Other
Subjects.

A great number of other subjects were discussed by the Chamber during the year, and suitable action taken with the view of protecting legitimate trading interests, but having regard to the dimensions to which this work has already reached it is impossible to deal with them here.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

1911.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 14th, 15th, and 16th March, 1911, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. J. S. Taylor, T. H. Ash, H. W. Edmunds, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary) ; and at the Autumnal Meeting, in Dublin, on the 29th and 30th August, by Messrs. H. W. Sambidge, Geo. Shipway, J. S. Taylor, and G. Henry Wright.

Railways
and Traders.

At the Annual Meeting Mr. H. W. Edmunds moved, on behalf of the Chamber, a resolution in favour of further powers being conferred upon the Board of Trade in regard to Railway matters, similar to a resolution which had been previously passed. It was carried unanimously.

Railway
Amalgama-
tions and
Agreements.

Mr. Edmunds also moved a resolution on the subject of Railway Amalgamations and Agreements, so far as they affected the traders, and urging the President of the Board of Trade to receive a deputation. This was also carried.

At the same meeting Mr. Geo. Shipway moved the resolution which had been passed in the previous year, Canal Development. urging the Government to adopt the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Canals, and after a destructive amendment, moved by the Manchester Chamber, had been moved, put to the vote and lost, the resolution was put and carried by a very large majority.

At the Autumnal Meeting of the Association Mr. Wright moved a resolution similar in terms to that proposed at Leeds a year previously with regard to the necessity for a more equitable arrangement in respect to orders given by Factory Inspectors to fence machinery, to provide exhaust or other ventilation, or to do any other thing for the protection of workpeople, and with a slight amendment the resolution was adopted unanimously. It should be stated here that the Secretary (Mr. Wright) gave evidence before the Departmental Committee on accidents in factories in the previous year when he sat in the witness chair for over seven hours, during the whole of which time he was subjected to a severe and Departmental cross-examination. Mr. J. S. Taylor, the President of the Chamber, was a member of this Committee, and he was one of the few who were prepared to give a free and impartial hearing to all witnesses. The other members seemed to be anxious only for evidence to support the officialism of the Factory Department. Factory and Workshop Act, 1901.

Mr. H. W. Sambidge at the Autumnal Meeting moved a resolution urging upon the Home Secretary the need for further legislation with the view of better preventing the theft of goods—legislation which would cast upon the immediate possessor of goods the onus of proof that he was lawfully possessed of them. It was carried unanimously. Stolen Goods.

During the year 1910 the Imperial and Local Finance Committee of the Chamber had conducted a thorough investigation into the questions of Income Tax Administration and Reform, and in October of that year produced their report. The document was very widely noticed in the Press, and several thousands of copies were distributed, applications being made for them in 1911 from all parts of the United Kingdom and also Income Tax.

from the United States, Canada, and other countries. Occupying thirty pages of print the report was generally regarded as constituting an exhaustive survey of the whole question, particularly in so far as it affected the commercial community. In their final conclusions and recommendations the Committee laid it down that the powers of the authorities to enforce the making of returns were adequate. They recommended *inter alia* that the tax should be maintained in time of peace at a much lower level; that the forms of return should be simplified; that the production of balance sheets should not be required; that surveyors of taxes should be required to accept a trading and profit and loss account certified by an accountant of repute; that full allowances should be made for the depreciation of plant, machinery, and all other wasting assets, based upon the original capital value and not upon the diminishing value as was the practice; that the Inland Revenue Authorities should be required each year to inform Income Tax payers on the various forms of assessment as to allowances to be made in respect of the obsolescence of machinery and plant in accordance with the letter addressed to the Association of Chambers of Commerce by the Treasury on the 28th May, 1897; that Income Tax should be levied only on the actual income of the tax-payer and not on a figure, arbitrarily ascertained as at present, which is usually larger; that the three years' average system should be abolished, the tax levied on the profits of the preceding year, and previous losses deducted; that the profits made by Co-operative Societies should be assessed for Income Tax in the same way as the profits of other trading concerns; that a reasonable discount should be allowed for the early payment of Income Tax; that agreed Assessments should not be reopened unless the surveyor had actual knowledge of a mistake or good grounds for believing that in previous returns assessable income had been purposely suppressed or there had afterwards been found by the taxpayer or surveyor an obvious error in the figures; that no arbitrary date should be fixed for making claims in respect of earned income, but that if any date be fixed it should be not earlier than the

due date for the payment of the tax ; that the limit on earned income, which entitled it to a lower rate of tax, should be abolished ; that acknowledgement should be sent by surveyors for all returns claiming reduction of rate on earned income ; that the office of General and Additional Commissioners of Income Tax should be abolished, and all their duties in future be performed by the Special Commissioners, with the assistance of the Surveyor of taxes ; that in the case of appeals the surveyor should not have the right to be present whilst the Commissioners were deliberating upon their decision unless the appellants also had the same right ; that only fully qualified men should be appointed as Surveyors of Taxes ; that only trained men should be appointed as Assessors, and that they should give their whole time to the duties of their office ; that in order to assist the Inland Revenue Authorities in regard to the preparation of the forms of Income Tax Return and other matters incidental thereto, one or more Advisory Committees should be appointed, to consist of representatives of the Treasury and Chambers of Commerce, and a representative of the Incorporated Law Society, of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, of the Incorporated Society of Accountants, and of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries.

The session of 1911 must have constituted a record in the actual number of legislative proposals, for about forty Bills were examined by the Council, and wherever it appeared necessary suitable action was taken by way of opposition or support. Excepting the National Insurance Bill, referred to in the next paragraph, four Bills relating to Trade Unions were especially considered—one of which was introduced by the Government for the purpose of amending the law as interpreted in the Osborne Judgment. This Bill was closely considered and a number of suggestions for its amendment were made to the Government. Proposals drafted Mr. Basil E. Peto, M.P., and Mr. H. S. Staveley-Hill, M.P., with regard to the form of the Merchandise Marks' Bill which the latter had introduced into Parliament on behalf of the Chamber in the previous session were also considered. These included an alteration of the qualifying words to be used in certain

Commercial
Legislation.

cases, the suggested words being "Empire made" if the goods were manufactured in any part of the British Empire outside the United Kingdom, and "Foreign made" if manufactured outside the United Kingdom. The Council informed the honourable members that their proposed words presented insuperable difficulties. If all goods so marked were retained in this country the objections would be minimised, but in the case of the large quantities of imported goods subsequently exported, the words "Empire made" and "Foreign made" would be meaningless to all except perhaps the immediate importer. On the other hand the words "British Empire made" and "Not British" were incapable of misconception, and were therefore greatly to be preferred. Subject to these words being restored and to the retention of the clause in the Chamber's Bill of the previous year relating to the application of English names to imported articles made in accordance with an expired patent, the Council decided to agree to the proposals. Messrs. Peto and Staveley Hill accepted the Council's suggestions and the Bill was finally drafted in the desired form.

**National
Insurance
Bill.**

In their annual report the Council stated that an immense amount of time had been given by them to the consideration of the National Insurance Bill introduced by the Government to provide insurance against loss of health, for the prevention and cure of sickness, and for insurance against unemployment. Voluminous reports were issued as to the action taken by the Chamber, and the activity exhibited was very favourably commented upon by traders of all classes. Immediately on the introduction of the Bill an explanatory memorandum was prepared and circulated amongst all the Chambers of Commerce of the country. A deputation waited upon the local members of Parliament at the House of Commons; a series of amendments which were regarded as essential in the interests of the commercial community was prepared and circulated throughout the United Kingdom; and frequent correspondence took place with members of Parliament and with the Government Departments concerned. It would be interesting to go into greater detail but limitations of space make this an absolute impossibility

as several scores of pages would be necessary for that purpose. Suffice it to say, therefore, that the Council conducted their gigantic task with great vigour ; that they exercised all the influence at their command with the view of securing a full consideration by Parliament of the whole of the details of the Bill and its amendment in various directions, so as to avoid inflicting injustice or hardship on either employers or employed. In view of the Parliamentary situation, however, and the fact that the Bill was passed through the Commons under very stringent closure regulations, many difficulties were encountered, which were accentuated by the fact that from day to day no one knew what new proposals were to be introduced or amendments suggested by the Government. Notwithstanding all this, however, many amendments were made in the directions urged by the Council, and the final terms of the Bill were very much improved thereby. The Council made a strong protest against the manner in which important details and principles were rushed through Parliament without discussion ; they also protested against the denial of representation to employers on the Committees of Approved Societies and on Local Insurance Committees ; and also expressed their disapproval of the extraordinarily wide powers conferred upon the Insurance Commissioners. As soon as the Bill was passed into law a National Insurance Committee was appointed as a Standing Committee of the Chamber to watch over and protect as far as possible the interests of employers in connection with the administration of the Act by the Commissioners, the Approved Societies, and the Local Insurance Committee, and the earnest co-operation of all members was invited. It is no exaggeration to say that throughout the whole of the proceedings on the Bill no other commercial body performed so much valuable work in the interests of the community as the Birmingham Chamber. A large sum of money was expended, and every one of the voluminous reports, statements and memoranda was widely circulated with the view of securing general support for the action taken. Members of Parliament and Chambers of Commerce bore testimony to the great help which the

Council thus afforded, and the President of the Board of Trade afterwards stated publicly that the criticisms made by the Chamber had been most helpful. If to all this we add that since the Act was passed into law the Chamber has answered many thousands of questions put by members as to their duties and responsibilities under the various parts of the Act we think we shall have said enough to show that on this one great question alone the Chamber has more than justified its existence.

Capture 'of
Private
Property at
Sea in Time
of War.

In October, 1910, Mr. F. E. Smith, K.C., M.P., addressed a General Meeting of the Chamber on the important and difficult question of the capture of private property at sea in time of war. As a result of the information conveyed in this address the Merchants' Section and General Purposes Committee were able to present a long report on the Declaration of London (1909) and the Naval Prize Bill, so as to enable the Council to express an opinion with regard thereto. The deliberations of the Section and Committee were facilitated by a carefully drawn memorandum prepared by the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright), in which he gave a short history of the practice of nations in regard to the capture of private property at sea in time of war. He then summarised the opinions in favour of and against immunity of merchant ships and private property carried therein. and called attention to the special position occupied by this country. Concluding, he said: "From the purely commercial point of view there is little difficulty in coming to a conclusion so far as the interests of traders in the United Kingdom are concerned. Anything which will reduce taxation to which they are now subjected; anything which in time of war as well as in times of peace will enable them to carry on their trade without undue interference and embarrassment; anything which will enable the population to receive an uninterrupted supply of food and raw materials must be beneficial *per se*. But there are other considerations involved, viz. :—those of Imperial tactics, strategy, and policy, which it is outside the province and beyond the experience of a Chamber of Commerce, as such, to express a definite opinion upon. These considerations

“can only be definitely decided by the Government, acting on the advice and with the aid of its Imperial Defence Committee, after consultation with its military and naval advisers, the representatives of the self-governing Colonies, and the competent Ministers of the chief Dependencies.” Upon the consideration of this memorandum an effort was made to secure the adoption of a recommendation that the British Government should take the earliest possible opportunity for reconsidering the subject with a view to the adoption of a general treaty guaranteeing security to all peaceful private trading on the seas (exactly as was permitted on land) and all non-contraband goods passing over the seas in time of war, and thus relieve all nations from the necessity of building huge warships to protect their merchant marine against capture and destruction. Whatever arguments might at another time have been possible on the merits of the question the Declaration of London (1909) altered the whole situation. In a separate memorandum on this the Secretary pointed out that under Article 24 of the Declaration, which was drawn up at an International Naval Conference, certain articles susceptible of use in war as well as for purposes of peace might, without notice, be treated as contraband of war under the name of “conditional contraband”; and that among these articles appeared foodstuffs (of which Great Britain had to import four-fifths of its supplies), forage and grain suitable for feeding animals, and a considerable number of other articles susceptible of use in war. Another article provided that conditional contraband should be liable to capture if destined for the use of the enemy, and that such destination should be presumed if the goods were consigned to a trader in the enemy country who, as part of his business, supplied the forces. It further provided that a similar presumption would arise if the goods were consigned to a fortified place belonging to the enemy or other place serving as a base for the enemy’s armed forces. The Secretary pointed out that, whereas the United Kingdom had to rely entirely on sea transport for her supplies, Continental States could make up any deficiency in their food and other supplies either from

contiguous States or by land conveyance from neutral ports. Hitherto, he added, food stuffs sent in neutral bottoms to a besieged or blockaded place had been treated as contraband, but the addition of the words "or other place serving as a base" would appear, in effect, to permit the capture and even destruction of practically all food-stuffs shipped in neutral vessels to any port in Great Britain owing to the fact that every such port is in railway connection with the armed bases of the country. Therefore if Great Britain were a belligerent neutral exporters and carriers would be unwilling to risk capture and destruction by supplying food and other supplies to Great Britain, when shipments to neutral Continental ports would involve no risk at all, although such neutral Continental ports might actually be supply ports relied on by the enemy. Furthermore, the Secretary added, in the event of Great Britain being a neutral, the extension of the definition of "destruction," which might render innocent goods and the ship which carried them contraband, would be productive of great loss and inconvenience to the carrying trade of this country. Another article of the Declaration permitted the destruction of neutral prizes and their cargoes under certain conditions (a right never previously recognised by this country), and thus by ratifying the Declaration Great Britain would not only sanction a danger to her food supplies in neutral vessels but also deprive neutrals of any right of protest. Commenting upon these and other facts placed before them by the Secretary the Merchants' Section and the General Purposes Committee said :—

"It consequently follows that even if the principle of immunity of private property from capture at sea were agreed to by the principal maritime powers, the British Government, by ratifying the Declaration of London would render it of none effect with regard to a very large proportion of our trade."

In view of this consideration the Section and Committee decided that it was, for the moment, desirable for the Chamber to confine its attentions to the

Declaration of London, and, if the Government ultimately declined, as a result of public pressure, to ratify, it again to take up the general question of immunity.

Consideration was also given to the Naval Prize Bill in the same connection. At the second Peace Conference at the Hague, 1907, a convention was drawn up for the establishment of an International Prize Court as a Court of Appeal from National Prize Courts, and it was proposed by the Government to ratify this convention if Parliament passed the Naval Prize Bill, a measure that was necessary to enable effect to be given to the convention. Without the convention, if Great Britain were a belligerent, a British Naval Prize Court would continue to have complete jurisdiction, but if the Naval Prize Bill were passed the judgments of the British Court would be open to review and to revision by an International Court, consisting of fifteen judges, the permanent members being representatives of Germany, the United States, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, and Russia, and the remaining seven judges or deputy judges being appointed in accordance with a rota of countries, including powers who might or might not even possess a maritime force, *e.g.*, Colombia, Uruguay, Roumania, Venezuela, Peru, Persia, Servia, Siam, Paraguay, Bolivia, Santo Domingo, Montenegro, and Salvador. Under the terms of the convention all questions submitted to the International Court would be decided by a majority of the judges present and the Court would consider its decisions in private, and its proceedings would be secret.

Upon the consideration of the whole of the facts of the case and of the recommendations of the Section and Committee referred to, it is not surprising that the Council decided to make a very strong representation to the Government, urging them to decline to ratify the Declaration of London and to withdraw the Naval Prize Bill. As is known, the latter was withdrawn as a result of the pressure of commercial opinion, and the former has not been ratified.

The twentieth century, so far, at any rate, as the first dozen years or so are concerned, will always be regarded by observers as a period which disclosed among

Imprison-
ment of
Debtors.

certain classes, a distinct vein of weak and sickly sentiment. To take a single instance, because a few unfortunate debtors are occasionally committed to prison kind-hearted people have made it a practice to condemn as brutal the law as to the penalty for neglect to obey the orders of the Court to pay. Early in 1911 Judge Amphlet, at the Birmingham County Court, after reviewing the statistics, said he did not hesitate to say that his jurisdiction under the Debtors' Act was "thoroughly loathsome work" to him, and he only wished it were found possible to relieve a County Court Judge from "those very irksome and degrading duties." He added that he had used every possible endeavour to make commitment orders more difficult to obtain. He then quoted figures for 1909 showing that the Court in which he sat had heard 9,611 judgment summonses; that in 6,757 cases commitment orders were issued in default of payment of fixed monthly instalments; that out of the latter 3,036 warrants were actually issued; and that out of 657 debtors arrested and taken to prison no less than 567 paid themselves out as soon as they got there. On such a flimsy case he based his remarks and expressed the hope that the law would soon be amended. The Retail Trades' Section at once took the matter up, and in the course of an interesting report pointed out that it must not be forgotten that there were dishonest and unscrupulous debtors as well as unscrupulous credit traders and that it was believed that the former class exercised their ingenuity not on the latter but on the ordinary shopkeeper and trader. If imprisonment of debtors were abolished the Section emphatically expressed the opinion that dishonest and unscrupulous debtors would easily be able to evade payment of their just debts and that the result would be disastrous to the trade of the country, as failing an abrupt cessation of credit—with its consequential loss to the trader—there would be a ruinous increase of bad debts. They added *inter alia* that they were not prepared to admit that any serious hardship was inflicted on the purchasing community, because a trader had to prove the possession of means on the part of the debtor before any County Court Judge would commit.

At the Council Meeting in April, 1911, Mr. J. S. Taylor retired from the office of President, and the Council placed on record their warmest appreciation of the splendid services he had rendered during the seven years he had occupied the office of Chairman and President, and conveyed to him their heartiest thanks for the ability and zeal he had always displayed and for the ungrudging and unstinting manner in which he had always placed his time and experience at the disposal of the Chamber. His colleagues on the Council, however, desired to pay him a more personal tribute, and it was unanimously decided to entertain him to a complimentary dinner. Shortly before the date fixed for this function, however, Mr. Taylor had the misfortune to sustain a dislocation and fracture of the ankle, which laid him aside for several weeks. The deferred function, however, took place at the Imperial Hotel on the 14th June, when Mr. Taylor, who was compelled to use crutches at the time, was the recipient of many a hearty handshake from the forty gentlemen who were there to do him well-deserved honour. During his occupancy of the chair the membership of the Chamber had trebled, having risen from about 400 to 1,200, and much of this growth was due to his personal interest in the work undertaken. At the Dinner the health of Mr. Taylor was proposed by the new President (Mr. H. W. Sambidge), and the event succeeding this is thus described in the columns of the "Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Journal":—

Mr. J. S.
Taylor.

"Then followed a scene which for its heart-felt enthusiasm has never been surpassed in the annals of the Chamber. The toast was drunk with musical honours, in which every one joined lustily. The company then gave three hearty cheers for Mr. Taylor, and these were followed by cheers for Miss Taylor, to whose tender and affectionate nursing Mr. Taylor's quick recovery from his serious accident was largely due."

The only word the writer would add is that never were tributes better deserved.

Piracy of
Trade Marks.

During the past decade grievous injury has been done to British trade by the unblushing piracy of trade marks in Japan, the Argentine, Germany, Chili, and other countries. Many instances have been from time to time placed before His Majesty's Government in the hope that some steps might be taken to secure some redress. Space will not permit of any lengthy details being given, but the following typical cases will show the seriousness of the matter :—

- (a) The names of Birmingham traders were registered in Japan and the Argentine by resident traders, who had formerly acted as agents. From the moment of registration it was unlawful for the Birmingham traders to send goods into those countries marked with their own names except with the consent of the registered owner of the trade mark.
- (b) Well-known brands of English goods were registered as trade marks in the Argentine—brands to which no single firm could establish a claim, but which were recognised as representing English articles of high quality. The registered owner was thus able to dictate terms to the English manufacturer or to use the brands for inferior foreign goods.
- (c) A trader in Germany applied to register a mark belonging to a Birmingham firm, and the latter were advised that they had no grounds for opposing registration—as the German trader was the first applicant.

The Council submitted to the Foreign Office a carefully considered recommendation to the effect that an effort should be made to arrange by international agreement that where, by documentary or other evidence submitted through diplomatic channels, it was clear that an act of piracy had been committed, powers should be conferred on the Trade Marks' Office concerned to expunge the mark from the register. It is to be regretted that the Foreign Office have treated the matter as one somewhat outside the scope of their functions and that thus no definite steps have been taken to make the piracy of trade marks impossible or, at any rate, unprofitable to the pirate,

who not infrequently communicates the fact that he has registered the mark and is prepared to enter into a deal for its transfer. The action taken by the Council, however, and the wide publicity given to it throughout the world has resulted in retarding the growth of the evil complained of.

On considering the Budget proposals of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Council made a representation to the Government, expressing satisfaction that during the previous two years there was a realised surplus of £5,607,000, but regretting that a larger sum had not been added to the old Sinking Fund or a sum allocated for the purpose of reducing income tax by at least 1d. in the £. They also again expressed their regret that income tax was to be maintained at a war level, and renewed their suggestion for a stamp duty on all gambling transactions in stocks and shares. Finally they expressed their strong disapproval of the proposal to pay members of Parliament £400 each per annum (making a total annual charge of £250,000), such a proposal not having been considered, demanded, or approved by the people.

On the 8th July the Chamber entertained as their guest at the Annual Banquet the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Ward, K.C.M.G., the Prime Minister of New Zealand, who was accompanied by Lady Ward, Miss Ward, Mr. G. Ward, Mrs. Seddon (widow of the previous New Zealand Premier), the Misses Seddon, and Captain R. J. Seddon, whilst on the 15th July a large number of representatives of the Dominion Parliaments, who were on a Parliamentary visit to this country, were entertained to a public luncheon by the Chamber. These visits created a wide amount of interest, and it cannot be doubted that the splendid reception given to our distinguished guests forged one more sound link in the chain encircling the great British Empire.

The Chamber again showed very considerable activity in regard to Railway Questions. Action was taken with regard to quite a number of important subjects affecting traders, including the classification of articles made in Birmingham, the arbitrary opening of packages, the restrictive regulations as to the loading of goods at

consignor's premises, demurrage, loss or pilferage of goods, and the unreasonable terms of the new owners' risk agreement. In many cases representations were made to the Board of Trade, whose intervention was urgently requested in order to secure more equitable treatment for the trading community and the public.

Telephones.

For some time the Council had had under consideration the question of the future of the Telephone System of the country, in view of the transfer of the undertaking of the National Telephone Co., Ltd., to the Government at the end of 1911. Many proposals had been made in various quarters as to the system of administration to be adopted after the transfer. It had been suggested, for instance, that the whole of the telephones—local lines and trunk lines—should be leased to the National Telephone Company for a term of years, the argument being the natural one that as the greater part of the service had been established by them they were likely to be the most efficient administrators and to be best able to meet modern requirements. Another proposal was that the whole of the telephones in the country should be administered and controlled by the General Post Office, the service being one that was essentially national. Another was that a Public Telephone Authority should be appointed *ad hoc* to administer and control the system of the Post Office and the National Telephone Company. Finally there was a proposal that the Post Office should be the future authority and that a strong Advisory Board, composed of thoroughly qualified representatives of the commercial community and presided over by the Postmaster-General should be appointed and entrusted with a large measure of administrative control over both the telephone and the telegraph system. After careful consideration of all the circumstances of the case the Council addressed a letter to the Postmaster-General urging that a Public Telephone Authority should be created on the lines of the Port of London Authority. As is now well-known, the Government ultimately decided that the administration and control of the telephones should be in the hands of the General Post Office; and that upon that course being adopted the Postmaster-General arranged for the con-

stitution of Advisory Committees in various parts of the country. Upon his request such a Committee was established in Birmingham by the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce, the latter having five representatives and the former two, and another representative being co-opted from the Borough of Smethwick. The Chamber of Commerce is the headquarters of the Committee, and it is confidently anticipated that the wise action of the Postmaster-General in seeking the advisory help of such Committees will ultimately result in increased use and the efficiency of the service.

In August, 1911, there occurred a General Railway Strike, and in view of the serious restriction of food and other supplies as a result of the wide stoppage of railway transport, the Chamber convened a conference of some of the principal produce and provision merchants, and vegetable, fruit, and meat salesmen, to consider what joint steps (if any) could be taken to meet possible emergencies. Immediately upon the occurrence of the strike the President and the Secretary of the Chamber waited upon a number of important firms to discuss the situation which had been created, and they came to the conclusion that such a conference as that which was convened might be very useful. The conference was very largely attended, and it was explained that the Chamber desired to ascertain whether there was any means of estimating, even approximately, the amount of food supplies then actually available in wholesale warehouses and in the railway goods stations within the Birmingham district; whether it was possible to give an approximate idea of the amount which (if the extremely limited railway service could be maintained) might be brought into Birmingham daily; to what extent Birmingham might, with a joint motor service obtain supplies from the country districts within a radius of 50 miles of the city; whether a joint motor service would be a feasible thing; and whether sufficient police protection was available for the private trader in obtaining supplies. A long and interesting discussion took place, and there were differences of opinion as to the period during which the existing food supplies of the city would last, although it was evident that in a

very short period (probably less than a week) the supply of a number of important articles would be entirely exhausted, whilst there was an unanimous opinion that in a few days the wholesale warehouses would be hard put to to meet the demands upon them. It was then unanimously decided that an effort should be made to induce the Railway Companies to let out to private traders their drays and horses, to be driven under a white flag, to indicate that they were temporarily the property of private traders ; that if necessary police escorts should be demanded to enable private traders to collect their consignments from the goods stations ; that all fruit and fish should be railed to New Street and Snow Hill so as to save long journeys for police and military escorts ; that efforts should be made to get goods lying at Liverpool released ; and that if the Railway Companies would accept for delivery all supplies consigned to Birmingham, the traders would share the responsibility and do their utmost to collect them. Immediately after the conclusion of the conference the President and Secretary drove to Curzon Street Goods Station and had an interview with the District Goods Manager, and it is quite possible that partly satisfactory arrangements could have been made to provide some relief to the distressing situation had the need continued. Fortunately, however, the strike came to an abrupt conclusion, and the need was not experienced. Many warm tributes were, however, paid to the Chamber for so promptly coming to the assistance of the public, and offering all the strength of its organisation towards any steps that might have been necessary to relieve the situation.

The Council of the Chamber was not, however, content to let the matter rest with the immediate local inconvenience, and, as a result, they addressed a strongly-worded letter to the President of the Board of Trade, calling his attention not only to the sufferings that might be occasioned to the public in general by a failure in the regular supplies of food stuffs—a failure which would most cruelly affect the artisan and the poorer classes, but also to the terrible loss occasioned to the community by the presence in their very midst, *e.g.*, at all ports, of

huge quantities of perishable merchandise which were needed for the sustenance of people in the interior, and which could not be delivered owing to the uncivilised method of conducting strikes which had grown up as a result of the decision of Parliament to place Trade Unions above the law, and to enable them to do things for which private individuals would be sent to prison. It was added that as a result of the serious dislocation and even paralysis of trade at the ports it was impossible for merchants and manufacturers to obtain the raw materials of industry, or to forward their finished products for export; that orders placed in England had been cancelled broadcast; and that the injury thus caused to our export trade would be of a lasting, if not irreparable, character.

In concluding their letter to the Board of Trade the Council stated that whilst they did not desire at the moment to attempt to discuss some of the more important questions which had been pressed upon them in connection with the methods employed in enforcing strikes, they ventured to suggest that it was not in the interests of the community that the Government or any other public authority should accept even by implication, the principle of taking permits from Strike Committees for the delivery of any commodities whatsoever, and they assured the Board of Trade that any action the Government might take, either during the continuance of the lamentable disputes then prevailing, or in the future, to protect goods and supplies of all kinds against organised or unorganised bands of rioters, would meet with the full approval not only of the commercial community but also of all other responsible citizens.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

1912.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

The delegates of the Chamber at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 12th, 13th, and 14th March, 1912, were Messrs. E. Parkes, M.P., H. W. Sambidge, J. S. Taylor, Geo. Shipway, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 10th and 11th September, 1912, Messrs. H. W. Sambidge, Geo. Shipway, T. H. Ash, H. W. Edmunds, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary).

National
Insurance
Act.

At the Annual Meeting of the Association Mr. H. W. Sambidge moved, on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber, a resolution to the following effect:—

“That the National Insurance Bill, having passed into law, it is essential to the interests of the commercial community that the Chambers of Commerce should be placed in such a position as will enable them to watch and consider the effects of the Act and the character of its administration, and that for this purpose the Executive Council be requested (1) to supply to each Chamber at the earliest possible moment copies (in duplicate) of all draft regulations and special orders issued by the Insurance Commissioners, the Board of Trade, or any other Government Department; (2) to give information to all such Chambers as to the dates upon or before which objections to such draft regulations and special orders may be lodged and to whom they should be addressed; (3) to acquaint the said Chambers with the dates upon which inquiries will be held with respect to such special orders; (4) to keep such Chambers as far as possible in touch with the decisions of the Insurance Commissioners, the Board of Trade, the Courts of Referees, the Umpire appointed by the Board of Trade and other central bodies or officers who may be vested with executive powers under the Act; (5) to endeavour, on request from any Chamber,

to organise deputations from the Chambers of Commerce to the authority created by or vested with powers under the Act; (6) to appear at all public inquiries held in pursuance of the provisions of the Act; and (7) generally to do all such other things as may be necessary with the view of carrying out the functions referred to in this resolution."

After some discussion between the President of the Association and the Birmingham delegates the resolution was adopted with certain amendments that were mutually agreed upon, and which involved the deletion of clauses 5 and 6, which were held by the President to be sufficiently covered by clause 7.

At the same meeting Mr. J. S. Taylor proposed, on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber, the resolution which had been previously carried on two occasions in favour of further powers being conferred upon the Board of Trade in regard to Railway Classification, Rates, and Conditions, and the appointment of a strong Departmental Committee to inquire into and report upon the many questions that had arisen between the Railway Companies on the one hand and the traders and the general public on the other.

At the same meeting Mr. Wright moved, on behalf of Birmingham, a resolution to the effect that whilst the Association was not adverse to the principle of Railway Amalgamations and Agreements which resulted in the elimination of wasteful competition and unnecessary duplication, provided that proper safeguards and guarantees are inserted for the protection of the interests of the trading community, it viewed with grave apprehension the increasing restrictions, the withdrawal or limitation of reasonable facilities, and the growing tendency to arbitrary and unfair treatment of the trading community which, it was alleged, had resulted from the private agreements and understandings already arrived at. The resolution went on to urge that it was essential to the interests of the trading community that all amalgamations, agreements, and arrangements between two or more Railway Companies should be made illegal unless approved by Parliament, and that no such

amalgamations, agreements, or arrangements should be approved unless proper and adequate safeguards were inserted for the protection of the commercial community. The resolution was carried.

Canal Development.

Mr. George Shipway, at the same meeting, moved a resolution identical with that which had previously been carried on one or two occasions in favour of the adoption by the Government of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Railways and Canals. Probably for the first time in the history of the Association the resolution was lost, a circumstance which was due to the fact that as the vote was taken towards the end of the meetings there were only a comparatively small number of delegates present. At the Autumnal Meeting the resolution was again moved by Mr. Shipway in a fuller assembly, and on this occasion it was carried by a large majority.

Railways' Bill.

At the Autumnal Meeting the President of the Chamber (Mr. H. W. Sambidge) moved :—

“That the Association strongly objects to any amendment of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1894), which would have the effect of transferring the onus of proof in regard to increased fares, rates, or charges from the Railway Companies to the traders ; that the Association, therefore, objects to the proposals to this effect which are contained in the Railways' Bill ; and that a petition be presented to Parliament praying that such proposals may not be passed into law.”

A definite assurance having been given by the President of the Association and other members of the Executive Council that the onus of proof would, in accordance with amendments to be drafted, be “put back on the Railway Companies,” the reference to the petition was withdrawn by the President of the Chamber, and the resolution was carried unanimously. Subsequent events have, however, proved that the Chamber was right and the Association wrong with regard to the onus of proof, and thus the burden of the opposition to the Bill was thrown back upon the Birmingham Chamber as a result of whose action, so far as Chambers of Commerce are concerned, any limitation that took place in the proposals of the Bill were very largely due.

During the session the Commercial Bills' Committee continued its useful work of examining and reporting upon Commercial Bills introduced into Parliament, and on consideration of their periodical reports the Council took such action as seemed to be necessary in the circumstances for the protection of the interests of the commercial community. There is no need to deal with these Bills in detail, as the great bulk of them were private members Bills, of which only a few had any possible chance of securing a second reading owing to modern Parliamentary conditions under which nearly all the time of the House of Commons is taken by the Government. An examination of the Statute Book for the nineteenth century would show conclusively that some of the most serviceable legislation was the result of Bills submitted by Private Members, who then had a better opportunity of getting their proposals passed into law, an opportunity, however, which became more and more restricted as the century progressed. In the twentieth century this restriction has been accentuated to such an extent that the progress of a Private Members' Bill depends almost entirely upon the amount of political pressure that can be brought to bear upon the Government, and it thus happens that, no matter what party is in power, party influence plays a more important part than the merits of any private members' proposals. It must not be assumed, however, that even this regrettable feature opposes any insuperable bar to the work of Chambers of Commerce, and a study of the available information in regard to the matter would prove conclusively that since the commencement of the twentieth century the Birmingham Chamber has criticised impartially the proposals initiated or accepted by all Governments that have been in power, and has helped to secure many important concessions. This, it is hoped and believed, will always be the policy of a strong Chamber, and it may here be said that all Governments have willingly and sympathetically listened to the criticism made upon and the suggestions put forward with regard to their proposals, and have not infrequently made important amendments as a result thereof.

**National
Insurance
Act.**

At the commencement of 1912 the Council prepared a memorandum on the subject of the formation of Approved Societies in connection with works and factories, for the purpose of administering sickness benefit under the National Insurance Act, it being believed that such societies would not only save existing shop clubs from extinction, but would also be capable of being more economically worked and be able to provide, in the long run, more benefits for the workers than the ordinary Approved Society. A meeting of employers and representatives of workers, attended by over 300 persons, was held, and addressed by the Chairman of the National Insurance Committee of the Chamber (Mr. Richard Parkes) who, as a matter of fact, was the originator of the idea. At this meeting it was almost unanimously decided that it was desirable such societies should be formed, and, as a result of the efforts made, many works' societies in the Birmingham district subsequently became approved societies, and thus in these works the human link between employers and employed was retained to the certain benefit of the employed. The idea was also taken up with much spirit in Sheffield, and many shop clubs became approved societies. Particulars of the Birmingham proposals were circulated very widely, and the Secretary of the Chamber addressed largely-attended meetings of the Chambers of Commerce of Derby, Bradford, Leicester, and Walsall in connection with the formation of works' societies. Early in the year the Chamber sent a deputation, consisting of Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Mr. J. S. Taylor, Mr. Richard Parkes, and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) to the National Health Insurance Commissioners to discuss with them the question of Rules for the Administration of Works' Societies, and it is interesting to observe that as a result of this discussion and subsequent negotiations the Chamber prepared a code of rules, based upon the Commissioners' Model Rules, which were approved by the National Health Insurance Commissioners who accepted them if presented by any Approved Works' Society. If any evidence were needed to show that the Chamber acted in a business-like way on this matter, it is to be found in the fact that they arranged for the

type of their approved Code of Rules to be kept standing, so that any Works' Society could obtain copies, in the first place for the official and separate approval of the Commissioners, and afterwards for the reprint, so that members of the Societies could be supplied.

Before the Act came into operation the Chamber was asked by the Commissioners if they could arrange for a meeting of employers to hear an address from an official lecturer. The answer was in the affirmative, and a meeting was afterwards convened, which was attended by nearly one thousand employers—probably the largest meeting of employers that has ever been held in Birmingham for the discussion of business. After the lecture the Council's comment was that it could not "be said that the official lecturer enlightened any of those present on the difficult portions of the Act, as the questions he answered could have been just as well answered in the offices of the Chamber."

Under the Act married women outworkers were excluded from compulsory insurance, but under regulations promulgated by the Commissioners their inclusion was provided for. The regulations were strongly objected to by the Council, and the manufacturers concerned were represented by the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) at a public inquiry held by a Commissioner appointed by the Insurance Commissioners in London, who sat in London, Birmingham, and other places. The grounds of objection were that married women outworkers in Birmingham could never make sufficient contributions to obtain effective insurance. The inquiry lasted several days, and the employers' case was very forcibly put, the action of the Chamber resulting in important amendments being made. As a net result the Council subsequently reported that the regulations in their amended form would impose a less burden upon employers and outworkers, but it was pointed out that no matter what regulations were provided within the four corners of the Act, there could be no real effective insurance of the married woman outworker. The modified regulations are now in force and it would be interesting to know whether

a single married woman outworker has obtained any actual benefit for her contributions, to say nothing of those incontinently imposed on the employer.

Many other questions arising out of the interpretation and administration of the National Insurance Act were brought under review during the year, and definite action was taken by the Council for the protection of commercial interests. To go into the details of these even cursory would require a large number of pages, and this would unduly swell the size of this volume. It need hardly be added, however, that the Council took advantage of every possible opportunity to prevent the infliction of additional injustice on employers, and that these efforts were crowned with a satisfactory amount of success.

**Increased
Railway
Rates.**

At the Council Meeting held in January, 1912, a report was received from the Railway Rates' Committee with regard to the assurance given by the Government to the Railway Companies, at the time of the settlement of the Railway Strike in August, 1911, that they would propose to Parliament in the next ensuing session, legislation conferring power upon the Railway Companies to increase rates in order to recoup themselves for any increase in their costs owing to advances in wages and improved conditions of labour. In view of the express provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1894)—an Act which might properly be regarded as the Traders' Charter—the Council agreed that the Government's proposal was most reactionary. Many reasons were given for this expression of opinion, including the fact that in 1910 the receipts per train mile were $7/11\frac{2}{5}$, as against $6/1\frac{1}{4}$ in 1901, and that the Railway Companies had for some years been able to recoup themselves for any additional costs. The manner in which this recoupment had already been and was being effected was clearly shown, and the Council contended that no further powers were necessary.

Shortly afterwards the Railways' Bill was introduced, and the Railway Rates' Committee made a very careful summary of its provisions and showed the extent to which it needed amendment. Upon this report a strong representation was made to the Board of Trade. On the

12th June a deputation from the Chamber, consisting of the President (Mr. H. W. Sambidge), the Treasurer (Mr. Geo. Shipway), the Chairman of the Railway Rates' Committee (Mr. H. W. Edmunds), Mr. T. H. Ash, Mr. A. E. Bond, Mr. W. Deakin, Mr. Frank Haseler, Mr. George Turner, and the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) had a long interview with the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P.), in the course of which they pointed out the many unjust particulars of the Bill, and finally urged that it be withdrawn so as to protect traders against the otherwise unfair and inequitable burdens that would be laid upon them. Subsequently the Council suggested the following clause to take the place of that in the Bill dealing with the same subject, viz. :—

“For the purpose of determining under Section I. of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1894) the reasonableness or otherwise of any increase in the rates, fares, or charges made by a Railway Company, the Railway and Canal Commission shall have regard to :—

- (a) Any net increase in the Railway Company's expenditure due to the cost of improvements made by the Companies in the conditions of employment of persons employed by them.
- (b) Any net increase or decrease of the cost to the Railway Company of performing the services for which such fares, rates, or charges were imposed.
- (c) Any other matter or thing which may have affected the earning power of the Companies in respect of the services for which such rates, fares, or charges were imposed.”

It was urged that this provision would constitute a full compliance with the terms of the pledge given by the Government to the Railway Companies, but in view of the Government proposals, which the Council held to be in excess of the pledge, the Railway Companies raised strong objections to any modification. They had demanded their pound of flesh ; it had been granted in a weak moment ; and they were determined to get hold of it regardless altogether of the interests of the public. At any rate,

that is the only conclusion to be drawn from their action in the matter. Through the action of the Birmingham and other Chambers, however, public opinion was thoroughly roused, and in the end the Railway Companies had to accept something different from the Board of Trades' original proposal, although the alteration that was made brought no satisfaction to the trader, whose interests were placed more firmly than ever before at the mercy of the great monopoly which the Railway Companies now constitute.

Canal Development.

In connection with the proposed increase of Railway rates the Chamber decided to call the attention of the Board of Trade once more to the urgent necessity for some steps to be taken to free the canals from railway control and to establish a Central Waterways' Board to take over all the main routes at the earliest possible date. The attitude of sheer inactivity of the Board of Trade in regard to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Canals and Inland Waterways is incomprehensible. They, more than any other party or body, are fully informed as to the necessities of the case, but it would seem that they are not so impressed with the needs of the trader because he cannot press them in quite the same way as one or more Railway Companies.

Port of London Through Rates.

For many months the Council had had under consideration the application of the Port of London Authority against certain Railway Companies for the fixing of through rates. Under the Port of London Act (1908) the Authority were established as a Railway Company for the purpose of such of the provisions of the Railway and Canal Traffic Acts as related to through rates, and in pursuance of the powers conferred upon them they had applied for the fixing of such through rates, and had asked the Chamber to give evidence on their behalf. The Railway Companies urged the Chamber not to support the application on the ground *inter alia* that it would involve a "break-up" of the group rates to the Port of London then existing. After giving the matter most careful consideration, and examining all the particulars placed before them by the Port Authority, the Railway Companies and others, it was decided that the Chamber should remain neutral so far as the case before the Railway

and Canal Traffic Commission was concerned ; but the Council also expressed the hope that, in any case, no arrangements would be made under which traders would have to make two separate payments for carriage and dock and terminal charges respectively instead of paying—as had been the practice of all inland traders—an all-round F.O.B. rate for all docks in the Port of London. The judgment of the Court was subsequently delivered against the Port Authority's application, and thus the Chamber's attitude of neutrality was justified.

In January, 1912, the Retail Trades' Section reported *Shops' Act*, with reference to the Shops' Act (1911), stating that (no doubt as a result of the facts placed before the Government and members of Parliament by the Section and by other bodies of retail traders throughout the country) it was very short as compared with the complex and controversial Bill submitted by the Government. They added that most of the provisions to which the Chamber had objected, on their recommendation, had been omitted from the Act, so that really good work was done. Accepting the Act as a *fait accompli* the Council at once undertook the task of finding out how best the Act could be administered with advantage to the Retail Trades, so as to ensure uniformity, and in this action, again, they undeniably exhibited the true spirit which is necessary if properly enacted laws are to be carried out. At this point it may be said quite candidly that the Act has produced certain very acute hardships, owing to its inelasticity—hardships which would have been obviated if the entire suggestions of the Chamber had been accepted—but on the whole it has, as all broad-minded retail traders will admit, conferred real benefits upon shop assistants, and has thus accomplished the principal end desired. Certain amendments are now found by experience to be necessary, and if the assistants as a body would show the same spirit of sweet reasonableness these could be carried out by means of a readjustment without injury to them, but with considerable benefit to their employers and to the public.

In their report on Income Tax Administration and *Income Tax Reform* issued in 1910 the Imperial and Local Finance

Committee of the Chamber referred to the hardship produced owing to the fact that income tax payers desiring to be assessed at the reduced rate for earned income must make a claim in respect of the same before September 30th in any year. Since that time cases had been brought to the notice of the Chamber where, owing to inadvertence or to absence from the country, such claims had not been made, and, as a consequence, taxpayers had been assessed on their trade profits or salaries, and had been forced to pay thereon as if they were unearned. After careful consideration the Chamber urged upon the Treasury, as an act of reason and bare justice that if any date be fixed for making such a claim it should be not earlier than the due date for the payment of the tax. In the same representation it was also urged that a discount of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ (at least) should be allowed for payment of income tax within seven days from the receipt of the demand note—the present condition being the very absurd and worthless one that the rate of discount should be $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ per annum, or one-twelfth of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ in respect of tax paid one month before the due date. It will be obvious to all that such a ridiculous provision must inevitably remain inoperative.

**Bankruptcy
Bill.**

Early in 1912 the Council, on the report of their Special Sub-Committee examined the Bankruptcy Bill which the Government proposed to reintroduce and which was passed into law during the session. The object of the Bill was to give effect, with certain modifications and additions, to the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on Bankruptcy, before which Mr. Howard Heaton gave evidence on behalf of the Chamber. Quite a satisfactory number of the suggestions made on behalf of the Chamber was embodied in the Bill, and the Council were therefore anxious that it should be passed into law, as considerable improvements would be thereby effected. There was no desire to embarrass the Government in piloting through Parliament so salutary a measure, and consequently the amendments suggested were put forward in appropriate terms showing that there was no intention of attempting to destroy the Bill, but rather to facilitate its course through Parliament. As is now well-known, the Bill was subsequently passed into law in a form which,

whilst it did not satisfy the Chamber in its entirety, reintroduced many of the reforms they had strenuously advocated for a considerable period.

In March, 1912, the Railway Rates' Committee reported to the Council that for several years they had watched with some anxiety the effects of the Amalgamations, Agreements, and Understandings between Railway Companies, and pointed out that in practically all cases the interests of the trader has been prejudiced more or less seriously. The appointment of the Departmental Committee to inquire into and report upon the subject was then referred to, and particulars of their conclusions and recommendations set forth in an exhaustive report. It was submitted by the Committee of the Chamber that their action and representations during the previous decade were thoroughly justified by the report of the Departmental Committee, and that, whilst in some respects their recommendations fell short of the suggestions made on behalf of the Chamber, if their proposals were adopted and embodied in legislation, the trader and the public would be enabled to secure some just and equitable treatment the advantage of which they were then denied. It is only necessary to add that no Chamber of Commerce had been more active and persistent in regard to railway amalgamations and agreements and that, in consequence, the report of the Committee upon the evidence submitted to them was received with considerable satisfaction.

On the morning after the introduction by the The Budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer of his Budget for 1912-1913, the Imperial and Local Finance Committee held a meeting in accordance with their usual and commendable practice, and upon their report the Council transmitted to the Government a representation to the effect that they were of opinion that the practice hitherto adopted that the Budget surplus should be utilised towards the repayment of the National Debt should be adhered to; that it was observed with regret that income tax was to be maintained at a war level in time of peace and prosperity—thus depriving the Exchequer of an adequate reserve in time of national emergency, and imposing an unduly

severe burden on industry ; and that they regretted that their suggestion made in the previous year that a stamp duty should be imposed on all gambling transactions in stocks and shares had not been adopted.

Congress of
Chambers of
Commerce of
the Empire.

The Eighth Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire was held in London on the 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th June, 1912, when the Chamber was represented by Mr. H. W. Sambidge, Mr. F. B. Goodman, Mr. Geo. Shipway, and Mr. G. Henry Wright (Secretary). The Congress met at the historic Guildhall in the City of London, and after an official welcome by the Lord Mayor, was formally opened by the Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith). About 300 delegates from all parts of the Empire were present, and many opportunities were afforded for the exchange of friendly greetings. The occasion was distinguished by the fact that their Majesties the King and Queen graciously received all the delegates and the ladies accompanying them, and entertained them to tea at Buckingham Palace on the 12th September, and also by the fact that the President of the Chamber and Mrs. Sambidge were amongst those selected for special presentation to their Majesties. In his report of the proceedings of the Congress the Secretary of the Chamber reported that "from the Imperial point of view the Congress was eminently successful, as it served to cement still further the feelings of mutual respect and affection" which were the pride of the component parts of the Empire. The subjects discussed at the conference were of great moment and importance to every part of the Empire, and the Chamber's delegates voted in favour of all those which it was felt would advance the cause of inter-Imperial co-operation.

Dominions'
Royal
Commission.

In 1912 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the varied questions relating to inter-Imperial trade, and on the 15th November the Secretary (Mr. G. Henry Wright) attended and gave evidence in considerable detail. The lines of his evidence had been previously settled by the Council after careful consideration and discussion, and in the course of it he advocated an extension of the practice of appointing Trade Commissioners ; a systematic collection of samples

of foreign goods competing with those of British origin ; an arrangement which would make the judgments of the Courts and arbitration awards issued in one part of the Empire enforceable in another ; the adoption of uniform laws with regard to the labelling of foodstuffs, etc. ; the removal of commercial travellers' taxes, and of the duty imposed by way of tax levied in certain Colonies on companies established in other parts of the Empire ; the desirability of uniformity being adopted with regard to Trade Mark Laws ; the necessity for uniformity with reference to Merchandise Marks ; and the urgency of all Customs' Duties on trade catalogues, price lists, etc., being repealed. At the time of writing the report of the Royal Commission is not available, but it is hoped that when this is prepared it will suggest, at any rate the principal means (independently, of course, of tariff questions, which were specifically excluded from the terms of reference to the Royal Commission) by which inter-Imperial trade might be increased.

For several years the Chamber had published a *Guide to Commercial Year Book* containing a classified trade index of the members of the Chamber for circulation in all parts of the world. The primary object of this work was to extend the trade of the city. In 1912 it was decided to issue another publication entitled, "Birmingham" for local circulation, the object of this being to call the attention of the public principally to the shopping facilities offered in the city and also to furnish a guide to the activities of Greater Birmingham. The minimum guaranteed circulation was 7,500, mainly among the principal residents of Birmingham and of the counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. In 1913 the volume was duly issued. It consisted of about 2,000 pages of large octavo size, was nicely illustrated, contained most useful information, and was, in fact, a very serviceable book of reference for the citizen and for the visitor. Many congratulatory messages were received regarding the value of the publication, and its annual publication should be assured.

In October, 1912, the Council adopted an important report of the Imperial and Local Finance Committee Local
Expenditure
and Rates.

respecting local expenditure and rates. It is not possible to give details of the contents of the report, but it may be said that the Committee pointed out with regard to the old city (that is, before the Greater Birmingham extension for which comparative figures were not available) that whilst expenditure was going up somewhat rapidly rateable value showed no signs of increasing. After pointing out the seriousness of this feature resolutions were passed to the effect that the taxable capacity of the city was limited ; that the then position with regard to rateable value showed that a reasonable limit had already been exceeded ; that there was great need for the City Council to fix a limit beyond which the poundage of rates should not be allowed to go ; that expenditure should be so effectively controlled as in due course to reduce rates to a point within that limit ; and that extreme care should be taken to ascertain that there was real and actual necessity for new work and schemes undertaken, and that when assured of this the Corporation should see that they were carried out with the utmost economy.

British
Empire
Trade Mark.

In November, 1912, the Council, on the report of the Patents Trade Marks' and Designs' Committee considered the application of the British Empire Trade Mark Association to register a British Empire Trade Mark. The Committee had had exhaustive inquiries made among trade mark owners, of whom a very important meeting had been held, and on their recommendation the Council decided to object to the proposed registration of the mark, on the following, among other grounds, viz. :—that as it would be impossible to register the mark in most of the chief commercial and industrial countries in the world, proper legal protection for it could not be obtained ; that even if this protection were possible the cost of registration throughout the world and in every class would be enormous, and a great number of agents would have to be appointed to report infringements ; that such a mark would be useless unless a standard of what constituted British production could be fixed—a task which was regarded as impossible ; and that the adoption and use of such a mark common to all manufacturers in every part of the Empire would inevitably lead to confusion and facilitate the “ passing-

off" of inferior productions for those of a higher standard, and that this would be highly detrimental to existing and future private marks, which either had or might become universally recognised as marks of quality as well as of origin.

On the 6th December, 1912, the Postmaster-General^s addressed a letter to the Chamber inviting the Council to form an Advisory Committee to assist him in connection with the administration of the telephone and telegraph services by bringing to his notice questions relating to those services as affecting the convenience and interests of the public bodies represented, as well as of the general public in Birmingham and the surrounding districts. He added that he would be pleased to arrange for the Postmaster-Surveyor of Birmingham and the District Manager of the Local Telephone Service to attend the Committee whenever they desired to have official information, and that, if necessary, the Secretary of the General Post Office would be glad to discuss personally with the representatives of the Committee questions of greater importance or send officers from headquarters to Birmingham for the purpose of discussing such matters with the Committee. The Council shortly afterwards decided to accept the invitation of the Postmaster-General and an Advisory Committee was subsequently formed consisting of two members of the City Council, one member of the Smethwick Town Council, and five members appointed by the Chamber as representing the commercial community. In accepting the invitation the Council offered their heartiest congratulations and thanks to the Postmaster-General for his action, and assured him that the Committee would do all in their power to assist him by their advice and suggestions in administering the huge undertakings under his control.

Telephones
and
Telegraphs.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

1913.

Association
of Chambers
of Commerce

At the Annual Meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, held in London on the 11th, 12th, and 13th March, 1913, the Chamber was represented by Messrs. H. W. Sambidge, J. S. Taylor, T. H. Ash, and G. Henry Wright (Secretary); and at the Autumnal Meeting, held in Antwerp, Belgium, on the 16th and 17th September, 1913, by Messrs. H. W. Sambidge, Geo. Shipway, W. S. Tunbridge, and G. Henry Wright.

Railway
Rates and
Conditions.

At the Autumnal Meeting Mr. W. S. Tunbridge moved the Chamber's usual resolution in favour of further powers being conferred upon the Board of Trade to deal with questions arising between Railway Companies and the trading community, and urging an independent and impartial inquiry. The resolution was carried, and, as is known, a Royal Commission was appointed within a few months from the passing of the resolution.

Railway
Amalgama-
tions and
Agreements.

Mr. H. W. Sambidge at the same meeting moved the Chamber's resolution on the subject of Railway Amalgamations, Agreements, and Understandings, the terms being similar to that passed on one or two previous occasions. It was carried.

Canal Devel-
opment.

Mr. Shipway, as at former meetings of the Association, moved a resolution urging upon the Government the necessity for adopting the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Canals, and notwithstanding vigorous opposition on the part of a few Chambers situated near the seaboard, it was carried by a substantial majority.

Membership
of the
Chamber.

The scope of the present chapter will now be limited to business transacted prior to the celebration of the Centenary of the Chamber on the 21st July, but for an account of the proceedings at the celebration readers are referred to subsequent pages, which contain a full record of the events on that historic occasion. In this paragraph it is merely desired to call attention to the huge growth that had taken place in the membership of the Chamber since its reorganisation at the end of 1902. Then the

membership was about 250. On the 21st July, 1913, it was 1,655, whilst at the time of writing, viz., November, it is over 1,700—surely a phenomenal growth and sterling testimony to the manner in which the Chamber had done its work in watching over and protecting the interests of the commercial community. It may be said, without hesitation, that during the period referred to no other Chamber in the country advanced to the same extent—a fact upon which the Council are entitled to congratulate themselves, and also a fact which fully repays them for their unstinting services.

Strong representations were made to the Government as to the Industrial and Provident Societies' Bill, the objects of which were *inter alia* to extend the limit of holdings by individuals in Industrial Co-operative Societies from £200 to £300; to provide for the return of shareholders to be made under a mark or number instead of by name or address; to exempt such Societies from stamp duty on certain documents; and to make other provision for facilitating the business working of these Societies. In the course of an exhaustive statement the Council pointed out that already Co-operative Societies occupied a position of great advantage as compared with other trading concerns, and that they considered it would be most detrimental to the interests of the retail trading community to confer further privileges upon them. Similar representations were made by traders' organisations throughout the country, and it is interesting to observe that several important amendments were made in the Bill before it was passed into law. Whilst dealing with this Bill the Council also renewed their previous representations with regard to the unfairness to the private trader of Co-operative Societies being exempted from direct assessment to income tax.

A representation was addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling his attention to the letter sent to him in 1910, which referred to the hardship inflicted on many classes of traders by reason of the Inhabited House Duty being assessed on the whole annual value of shops and warehouses where only a small part of the premises was reserved for employees living in. As an instance of the

Co-operative
Societies and
Income Tax.

Inhabited
House Duty.

effect of the law it was pointed out that in one business house in Birmingham living-in accommodation was provided for twelve assistants, but Duty was assessed on £900, the annual value of the whole premises, only a fractional part of which was used for residential purposes. In another case an important firm, for the convenience and comfort of their staff, provided a meal-room and, for the purpose of administering this, appointed a housekeeper and servants to attend to the meals. The latter were provided with living accommodation—but none of the assistants lived in. Notwithstanding this, however, Duty was immediately assessed on the whole building and the amount which had to be paid was so excessive that the firm had to discontinue the arrangement. It was pointed out also that this principle applied to a series of shops having inter-communication, and also to schools, colleges, and other places where some person or persons, other than a caretaker, resided on the premises. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was urged, as an act of bare justice and reason, to make provision in the Finance Act for the removal of this glaring anomaly.

The Budget. Following their usual practice the Imperial and Local Finance Committee held a meeting almost immediately after the introduction by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of his Annual Budget. Upon the report of this Committee the Council made objection to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to the local members of Parliament with regard to the appropriation for ensuing expenditure of £1,000,000 underspent during the previous year, pointing out that in their opinion the principle hitherto adopted of utilising the Budget surplus for the repayment of part of the National Debt was a very salutary one, and should have been adhered to. The Council also expressed serious doubts as to the methods adopted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in regard to the raising of sufficient revenue to meet national expenditure during the current year, and they observed that in addition to no special provision being made to meet an estimated increased expenditure of £7,500,000, in addition to the appropriation of the sum of £1,000,000 previously referred to, a quite inadequate margin had been allowed for supplementary estimates, as

a result of which there was a danger that a deficit might be incurred. In their communication to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the Council also called his attention to the need for the imposition of a stamp duty on all gambling transactions in stocks and shares; a reduction in the poundage of income tax; a revision of the law with regard to the recovery of moneys paid for petrol tax; and a distinct anomaly in regard to the super-tax on income.

The Railway and Canal Traffic Act (1913), which was passed as a result of the pledge given by the Government to the Railway Companies on the occasion of the Railway Strike in August, 1911, was carefully considered by the Council shortly after its enactment, and a most valuable report was prepared and circulated to the extent of several thousands of copies, which brought under review the whole of the railway situation as it affected the trader. Copies of this report were circulated among all the Chambers of Commerce, and many applications were received for it from various parts of the country. After reviewing the circumstances incident to the enactment of the Act referred to, the report called attention to the many ways by which the Railway Companies had already been able to obtain increased revenue by literally squeezing the trader and the public, and also pointed out that as a result of the closer combination between the Companies the latter had adopted a policy for obtaining increased revenue regardless altogether of the interests of the community and the welfare of the country. After reviewing the whole of the circumstances of the case the Council decided to urge upon the Government the pressing need for carrying into effect the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Canals, and to convene a conference of Midland Chambers of Commerce to decide what joint action might be taken with the object of bringing pressure to bear upon the Government. This conference subsequently took place, and the report and recommendations of the Chamber were unanimously approved. The subsequent appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the whole question is evidence that the pressure of this and other Chambers and Commercial Associations throughout the country has been of some avail.

Increase of
Railway
Rates.

**Commercial
Legislation.**

Notwithstanding the considerable amount of work which had to be done in connection with the celebration of the Centenary of the Chamber, the Council, with commendable vigour, persisted in carrying on their ordinary functions. Questions of Railway Rates, Conditions and Charges; matters relating to foreign and Colonial tariffs; numerous other questions affecting the commercial community; and last, but not least, commercial legislation were thoroughly inquired into, reported upon, and action taken. The work of the Chamber, in regard to the latter, was carried out as usual, and many representations were made to the Government and to members of Parliament.

Conclusion.

The end of these Chronicles, covering a period of over one hundred and thirty years, has now been reached, and whilst the volume has grown to a size much larger than was contemplated, it must here be stated quite plainly that it has been possible to deal with only a comparatively small portion of the work accomplished by the Chamber. The writer is convinced, however, that any impartial reader of the preceding pages will readily agree that invaluable services have been rendered to the commercial community. From its initiation the Chamber has been ever ready to take up questions of public and commercial interest, and the official records which exist show that this has been done very thoroughly. Owing to the limitations of space no attempt has been made to deal exhaustively with many of the subjects, but only to indicate the line of view and of action decided upon. It is submitted, however, that sufficient has been recorded to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Chamber is not only a permanent body, but one that is entitled to the support of every citizen.

As a final word the writer would say that he is only too conscious of the many defects which will be found in this work. Its execution has occupied all his spare time for about eighteen months, and has involved the examination of many thousands of pages of official and unofficial records. The conditions under which the work has been accomplished have made it impossible for him to put it into the form or to give it that thorough

revision that he would naturally have desired to do, and he realises, in view of the fact that much of the writing and reading of proofs has had to be done late at night, that a number of errors may be discovered in the text, and that the language used will be found to leave something to be desired. Notwithstanding all this, however, he ventures to submit it as a faithful indication of the wide scope of the work which, during a period of over a century, a great number of the most influential and distinguished commercial and professional men of the city have performed, not for their own particular benefit, but for that of the business and commercial community of the district. The services of these gentlemen have been given ungrudgingly, and they have spared neither time nor labour in their desire to watch over and to protect efficiently the interests they were appointed to represent.

1813—1913.

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (Incorporated).

CENTENARY COMMEMORATION,

21st July, 1913.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Reprinted from

‘The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Journal.’

In their loyal address to His Majesty the King the Chamber of Commerce stated that they proposed to celebrate the Centenary of their foundation in a fitting and dignified manner. All who were present at the epoch-making functions which took place on the 21st July will agree that they formed a fitting commemoration of a hundred years' work, and were in every way dignified. The Chamber was deeply honoured by a message from the King, transmitted by the Home Secretary, in which His Majesty stated that he was "very sensible of the importance and value of the functions which the Chamber performs in watching over and fostering the trade and manufacture of one of the greatest commercial and industrial centres of his dominions." His Majesty also congratulated the Chamber "upon the long period of honourable activity" which it was then celebrating, and trusted that its future labours might be "crowned with continued and increasing success."

As a full report of the whole proceedings is published in another part of this issue, it is unnecessary here for us to dilate upon them, beyond saying that they were in every way successful and well attended. At the public meeting in the Town Hall there were present over five hundred business men; at the luncheon the guests numbered two hundred and forty; there were about one thousand people present at the Lord Mayor's reception and tea; and at the banquet in the evening the attendance numbered four hundred and twenty. The day was a full one, and withal a memorable and inspiring one, honoured as it was by the presence of the Deputy Lord Mayor as the representative of the civic head of the municipality (the Lord Mayor being unfortunately absent owing to indisposition), of the Prime Minister (the head of His Majesty's Government), of the Bishop of the Diocese, and of the venerable and respected Hon. President of the Chamber (Mr. Jesse Collings). Recognised thus by His Majesty, by the Government, by the municipality, by the church, and by the commercial community, the celebration was no mere parochial function, but an event of national importance, and if anything be needed to emphasize this it may be found in the speech of the Prime Minister, who made use of the opportunity by making a declaration and uttering a warning of international concern in regard to the chaotic condition of things in the Balkan States, a declaration and a warning which immediately were flashed over the wires and at once circulated throughout the press of Europe.

If space permitted, we would like to comment on the high tone and order of the many speeches delivered during the day, commencing with the brilliant oration delivered at the public meeting by Sir George Houstoun Reid, and culminating in the eloquent and weighty pronouncement of the Prime Minister in the evening. At the banquet the Deputy Lord Mayor, in his own inimitable way, referred to the "orgie of speech-making" which had taken place, whilst Mr. Collings said it had been a Red Letter Day—a phrase pregnant with meaning to all who will stop to think.

The commemoration of the Centenary of an organised working body has a two-fold object. It is intended to mark an epoch from which we can look back into the past and forward into the future. Looking back we see a hundred years of work performed by a body of public-spirited men, numbering among them some of Birmingham's really great citizens. We find the names of Spooner, Lloyd, Muntz, Chance, Beale, Wright, Scholefield, Goodman, Ryland, Dixon, and Timmins, and many others who were prominent in the civic and commercial life of their day. We find them devoting time, attention, and money to the interests and the welfare of commerce and industry. We see them in season and out of season striving for reforms, many of which they obtained to the great benefit of the classes they represented. Looking to the future, what do we see? We see an age of organisation and combination more complete and more perfect than anything else which has preceded it; we see the need for commercial men to consolidate their efforts and their strength on matters of common concern, and we see those who may still decline to associate with their fellows and prefer to "paddle their own canoe" shut out from participation in the fruits that organisation and combination may secure. The expression "unity is strength" is as old as the hills, but the next century will see its meaning accentuated to a degree. We would therefore urge upon all public-spirited citizens who are interested directly or indirectly in the welfare of trade and industry the necessity for considering whether it is not meet that every one of them should at once rally to the support of the Chamber of Commerce, and thus enable it to commence its second century with even larger and wider aspirations than it has enjoyed in the past.

PUBLIC MEETING IN TOWN HALL.

On Monday, July 21st, 1913, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce celebrated with fitting dignity the Centenary of its foundation. Strictly speaking, the hundredth anniversary should have been celebrated

thirty years ago, for, in the year 1783, there was formed in the town of Birmingham a General Commercial Committee, the purposes of which were to watch over and to protect the commercial and industrial interests of the town and district. Fortunately, however, for us in the year A.D. 1913, the Chamber of Commerce of thirty years ago left it to us to celebrate the event at the expiration of one hundred years from the time when the Chamber was formally established at a Town's Meeting under the actual name of a Chamber of Commerce.

The Commemoration proceedings commenced appropriately with a public meeting at the Town Hall at 12 noon, which was attended by many public and professional men, manufacturers, tradesmen, and others.

Owing to indisposition the Lord Mayor (Lieut.-Col. Ernest Martineau), who had taken an active interest in the preparations for the celebration, was unable to be present, and his place was taken by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman W. H. Bowater, J.P.). Supporting him on the platform were the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., Sir George Reid, Sir A. Rollit, the Bishop of Birmingham, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, J.P., Lord Southwark, Alderman Sir Hallewell Rogers, Sir Algernon F. Firth, Bart., Mr. E. Parkes, M.P., Messrs. J. S. Taylor, E. V. Hiley (Town Clerk), H. C. Field, J.P., Geo. Shipway, J.P., F. B. Goodman, J.P., G. Henry Wright (Secretary of the Chamber), and many others occupying high positions in the city and the Chamber, whilst in the body of the hall were a very large number of the city's most prominent business men, together with nearly two hundred specially invited guests from all parts of the United Kingdom.

In opening the proceedings the Chairman (Alderman Bowater) said they would agree with him in expressions of regret that the Lord Mayor, through indisposition, was unable to take the chair at that most important meeting. Fortunately he was convalescent, and would soon be able to resume his ordinary public duties. (Applause.) That meeting was the first of a series of functions to celebrate the Centenary of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. In thinking of the century through which it had occupied such an active part in the public

management of the commercial interests of the city, one naturally thought of the condition of affairs in Birmingham when the Chamber began operations in 1813. Birmingham then was a very small town. It was not incorporated as a borough until 1838. It then had about 85,000 inhabitants; to-day there were ten times as many—850,000. Its rateable value then was very little over £100,000, while now it was forty times as great, being four millions. The number of houses assessed to local rates was only 9,000; to-day it was 170,000. Just before that there were 8,000 dwellings assessed, and the poverty of the town was such that only 3,000 were in a position to pay rates at all. The other 5,000 were exempt. There were then 125—mostly very small and narrow—streets, whilst now they had 636 miles of streets. The area then was less than 8,000 acres; now it was 43,000 acres, equal to about 68 square miles. It was governed by a High Bailiff, whereas now the city had a Lord Mayor and 120 aldermen and councillors. The peace and order of the town were maintained by two watchmen, who were called “Charleys.” (Laughter.) It now required 1,300 police to perform that same duty. (Renewed laughter.) In the old days there was no debt on the town; it had not sufficient credit to be able to borrow money. (Laughter.) Indeed, some thirteen years later their records announced that many respectable people in the town were “hampered and harassed for the want of money”—a condition that existed among some of them to-day. (Laughter.) They could not borrow the money in those days, but to-day the city had borrowed $18\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds. They did not speak of it as a debt—it was not a debt in the ordinary sense of that word. It was capital splendidly invested, and bringing in a dividend in the shape of improved health and better government of nearly a million people. (Applause.) They did not know what few thousands that hamlet 100 years ago derived from the rates, but to-day the ratepayers contributed more or less willingly $1\frac{3}{4}$ million pounds. They spent on the public services of the city just under four million pounds per annum, and had a staff of 12,000 or 13,000 individuals, whose wages amounted each year

to $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions. He gave them those figures—it might be tediously—to show the great strides made during the century of the existence of the Chamber of Commerce.

What was the cause of that great increase in houses and inhabitants, and in the accumulated and current wealth of that district? It was not due to any historical attractions of that place. It was not because Birmingham was a health resort, or even a pleasure resort. It was not the shrine of the great, but the home of living men. Men of industry and commerce of previous generations, as well as the present, had brought about that great increase. There were no idle classes in the city. There were none of those “who toil not neither do they spin.” There was no room for these; Birmingham men were all business men. About the time the Chamber was instituted their local historian, Hutton, wrote, “Gentlemen as well as buttons are stamped here, but when finished are moved off.” He (Alderman Bowater) would not like to say there were no gentlemen in the city, but there were no idle gentlemen, and there were very few gentlemen of leisure. They were all engaged in, or had very recently been engaged in, the commercial undertakings of that great centre. All that increase was due to the city’s industry and commerce. Many attempts had been made to number the different occupations and trades carried on in Birmingham, but these were literally innumerable. Everything in metal and in most other substances was manufactured there. It had always been said that anything from a needle to an anchor could be obtained. While the Chamber of Commerce would not claim that the entire increase of the industrial importance of the city was due to their exertions, that body had taken a most active part in the public management of those great commercial affairs, and he was quite sure that they had been an influence to the great advantage of those great concerns, and they as a city wished, therefore, to congratulate the members of the Chamber upon the Centenary of their Association, and to impress upon them how much the community at large appreciated their efforts. That it well represented the business undertakings of the city was apparent when they remembered that it

now numbered over 1,600 members. (Applause.) On behalf of the city generally he expressed the hope that the Chamber would for many years continue its good work. (Applause.)

Mr. G. Henry Wright, Secretary to the Chamber of Commerce, then read an address which had been presented to His Majesty the King:—

LOYAL ADDRESS.

“To His Most Gracious Majesty King George V.

“May it please your Majesty.

“We, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (Incorporated), consisting of over one thousand six hundred members, and being representative of all branches of commerce, industry, and retail trade in this city and the surrounding district, humbly desire to approach your Majesty on the occasion of the celebration of our Centenary on the twenty-first day of July, one thousand nine hundred and thirteen.

“We humbly offer to your Majesty an expression of the affectionate loyalty and attachment of the business community of this populous district to your Majesty’s throne and person.

“We desire respectfully to acquaint your Majesty that in the year 1783 there was established in the town of Birmingham a Commercial Society or Committee, consisting of business firms and persons voluntarily associated together for the purpose of watching over and protecting, as far as possible, the interests of commerce and industry, and that after this body passed through some vicissitudes the Chamber was established at a town’s meeting held on the 21st July, 1813.

“We also humbly desire to assure your Majesty that since the year 1813 the Chamber, which always has been and is a non-party body, has earnestly and consistently laboured to conserve the commercial and industrial interests of this district in particular, and of the country in general, by calling attention to

obstacles and difficulties encountered from time to time by your Majesty's loyal and devoted subjects in their trade, both at home and abroad, and by suggesting measures for the removal thereof. In all their suggestions it has been the constant endeavour of the Chamber to make no proposals which would be likely in any way to operate to the detriment of other sections of the community, but, on the contrary, to suggest only such measures as the Chamber considered would commend themselves to your Majesty's Ministers and Parliament as being in the interests of the welfare of the nation to which we are proud to belong.

"We beg respectfully to inform your Majesty that on the 21st July, 1913, we propose to celebrate our Centenary in a fitting and dignified manner, and that on the occasion of the commemoration the Lord Mayor of your Majesty's Loyal City of Birmingham (Lieut.-Colonel Ernest Martineau), your Majesty's Prime Minister (the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P.), the President of the Board of Trade (the Right Hon. Sydney Buxton, M.P.), together with distinguished members of your Majesty's Houses of Parliament, Diplomatic and Consular representatives of many foreign States, the High Commissioners and Agents-General of your Majesty's self-governing Dominions, and representatives of Chambers of Commerce from all parts of the United Kingdom, will be present as the honoured guests of the Chamber at the various functions which have been arranged in connection with the celebration.

"We humbly avail ourselves of this opportunity of acknowledging with the deepest gratitude that the eminently wise, tactful, and unremitting labour of your Majesty in furthering the extension of the trade of the Empire, and in the cause of amity and goodwill among nations, has earned the heartfelt thanks of the mercantile and manufacturing classes, whose vital interests, owing to the magnitude of their trade in all parts of the world, are favourably affected by the

friendly relations which have been preserved for so long a period between the United Kingdom and foreign countries.

“We shall every pray that your Majesty’s beneficent rule may be long and glorious, bringing added lustre to your reign and happiness for your Majesty’s loyal and devoted subjects.

“Signed on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce (Incorporated), this fourteenth day of July, one thousand nine hundred and thirteen.

“ (Signed) Jesse Collings, Hon. President.

“ H. W. Sambidge, President.

“ J. S. Taylor, Vice-President.

“ G. Henry Wright, Secretary.”

THE KING’S REPLY.

Mr. Wright then announced that a gracious reply had been received from the King through the Home Secretary, Mr. Reginald McKenna. It read as follows :—

“ Home Office,

“ Whitehall, S.W.,

“ 19th July, 1913.

“ Sir,—I am commanded by the King to convey to you the thanks of His Majesty for the loyal and dutiful address which you have forwarded on behalf of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. His Majesty is interested to learn that the Chamber is now celebrating the hundredth anniversary of its establishment. He is very sensible of the importance and value of the functions which the Chamber performs in watching over and fostering the trade and manufacture of one of the greatest commercial and industrial centres of his Dominions. He congratulates the Chamber of Commerce upon the long period of honourable activity which it is now

celebrating, and he trusts that in the future its labours may be crowned with continued and increasing success.

“ I am, sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ (Signed) Reginald McKenna.

“ The President of the Birmingham
Chamber of Commerce.”

The city organist, Mr. C. W. Perkins, played the National Anthem which was heartily sung by the audience standing.

COMMEMORATIVE RESOLUTION.

The Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., Honorary President of the Chamber, proposed the following resolution :—

“ That this meeting desires to commemorate in a public manner the attainment by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce of its Centenary, and to wish it a continuance of its useful career.”

Mr. Collings said he was sure they regretted the absence of the Lord Mayor of the city from the chair, so ably filled by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman Bowater). Lieutenant-Colonel Martineau displayed that zeal in the public service which was a tradition among the Martineau family. The Chamber of late years, said Mr. Collings, had made remarkable progress. From the 250 members of which it consisted a few years ago it had risen to 1,650 members, and he appealed to all commercial firms and commercial traders of every class to join it, so that they might reach 2,000 members before the close of the year. By doing so they would advance their own interests and those of the trading community at large. The extraordinary progress the Chamber had made was due to the efforts of its officers, among whom he might mention their friends, Mr. J. S. Taylor and Mr. H. W. Sambidge, the acting President, the Executive Council, and the various Committees and the different sections of trade, who had all been most devoted in their

efforts to increase the prosperity of the Chamber, and he must not forget their zealous, able, and indefatigable Secretary, Mr. Wright—(Applause)—to whom the progress of the Chamber was so largely due.

The Birmingham Chamber had always been an active one. It had initiated many things, and had received the thanks of successive Governments for its advice and assistance. It was the first to advocate the Compulsory Registration of Trade Marks, which became law in 1872. It was among the first to move, and never ceased its efforts, in the direction of the Limited Partnership Law passed in 1909. Mr. Chamberlain in the sixties was a very active member of the Council of the Chamber, until he was called to another sphere. (Applause.) He could say a great deal more about the Chamber if time permitted, but they had among them Sir George Reid —(Applause)—the High Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Australia, whom they were most anxious to hear, and he himself was glad to see his old friend, Sir Albert Rollit—(Applause)—who had done so much yeoman work in connection with Chambers of Commerce. He had not had the pleasure of seeing him since they sat so many years together in the House of Commons.

Mr. H. W. Sambidge seconded the resolution. He did so with a good deal of satisfaction. They were met there on an occasion quite unique to commemorate the Centenary of the Chamber. It was an extremely important day for the Chamber of Commerce. Their minds went back to 1813, when a body of public-spirited men in the town, feeling the necessity of protecting and fostering the interests of trade, met together—manufacturers, merchants and others—to pass this resolution, which was taken from the records, and which he wished to read to them. This resolution was proposed, viz. :— “That it is expedient to establish a commercial society in the town of Birmingham for the purpose of collecting and representing the opinions of its merchants and manufacturers, of acting as a medium of communication between the community and the Legislature on the subject of trade, and co-operating as occasion may require with other parts of the United Kingdom.” That resolution was passed

unanimously, and on July 21st, 1813, the Chamber of Commerce was formed. They were there to pay a tribute of respect to those men who were so active in establishing and carrying on that Chamber of Commerce. It was not done without a good deal of self-sacrifice. It was done with great public spirit.

The Deputy Lord Mayor had contrasted what the city was now with what it must have been then with its 90,000 inhabitants. The developments had been extraordinary. One could hardly conceive what it meant, but so it was, and now after all those wonderful developments they found themselves citizens of one of the most important commercial centres in the King's Dominions. Those developments had come about, and he ventured to claim that they had been to a very great extent due to the work of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. He hoped they would agree with him that it was so. The resolution expressed the hope that the Chamber of Commerce would continue its useful work. He was pleased to say that after a long life of one hundred years the Chamber was healthy, strong, vigorous, and quite ready to do useful work in the future. (Applause.)

ORATION BY SIR GEO. HOUSTOUN REID.

The Right Hon. Sir George Houstoun Reid, P.C., K.C.M.G., K.C. (High Commissioner for Australia), said: I think it a great honour to be called on to-day to support the resolution. These celebrations of the flight of a hundred years can be made monuments upon the plains of time, from which you can take a broad survey of the progress of humanity. If you take the century to which we are now addressing ourselves, it is the most wonderful century humanity has yet experienced. (Applause.) For a moment just go back with me one hundred years. The horrors of the French Revolution had merged into a mad dream of universal conquest. The greatest military adventurer had set himself to trample all the dynasties and all the liberties of Europe under foot. His mad, selfish ambitions had been chilled by the relentless snows of Russia. The armies of a

revengeful Europe were just assembling in order to crush him. Then think of the position of our own country 100 years ago. She had passed through a long period of sickly sentiment and foppish vice. But in her stern and tremendous struggle to preserve these islands from invasion, and to assert once more the liberties of mankind, she had emerged into a period of steadfastness and strength, to which she had long been a stranger. Her soldiers and her sailors, when they stood against the farmers of America in the very zenith of their world-wide triumphs, failed. Englishmen—English bred fighting in a good cause against English bred fighting in a bad cause. But when the might and power of Britain took up that noble stand against the military adventurer, the soldiers and sailors who had failed—well, you know their history, the history of Waterloo and Trafalgar. (Applause.)

What was human intercourse 100 years ago? Now the oceans are full of flying fleets of commerce. The air, and the land, and below the surface of the seas vibrate with the flashing messages of history and of commerce. One hundred years ago there were no railways, there were no telegraphs, there were no steamships. And if we survey the sphere of mental progress there are similar contrasts. The glorious light of science to-day, the glorious inventions which have linked human genius and human interests and industries with the mighty forces of silent Nature—they were then on the threshold. Political liberty, as we know it now, had not been born. The sphere of labour—and when I use the word labour I use it in no narrow view, I look upon human labour as the labour of all classes—(Applause)—and every condition of mankind. (Applause.) But viewing labour in its widest aspect, what a sad picture 100 years ago! So much of misery, so much of starvation, so much of sedition. Now look at the Britain of to-day. There will be restlessness always, and it is not a bad thing. (Hear, hear.) But looking across the surface of the British Isles to-day, and thinking of the misery of 100 years ago, I see a new birth of the British race. The children: What a sad life the children of England had 100 years ago. (Hear, hear.) Education? No. If I had to appoint

a Royal Commission now I would appoint one first to discover what education really means. (Hear, hear.) It cannot mean that which does not stimulate, but destroys, the Divine inquisitiveness of childhood in its earliest years. (Applause.)

Now, about our laws 100 years ago. The petty thief to the extent of 40/- from a shop or a ship was condemned to death. The child of ten who took a silk handkerchief of the value of 5/- from the pocket of a man was condemned to death. The learned Chancellors of the House of Lords resisted reform ; it would be too rash a premium on crime. Now we see that the worst way in which to reform a man is to hang him. (Laughter and applause.) Now, about commerce 100 years ago. The commerce of these islands ran to £80,000,000 ; it is now about £1,300,000,000 a year. It ran at four guineas a head ; it was £21 a head in 1900 ; and the growth of 100 years—or, rather, of all time up to 1913, has been equalled in the last 16 years.

Now let me say a word or two about the glorious principle which this celebration has in its very heart. There are two principles of modern progress—one a very old one, one a very new one. The old one is the principle of individual competition, and it is a principle you can never destroy in human nature by all the Acts of Parliament in the world. (Applause.) But there is a newer principle come into life of immense value, which is embodied in the spirit of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce—the spirit of collective co-operation. Now you men of Birmingham, then, you stand in the very forefront of the battles of individual endeavours to excel. But you also stand together in your Chamber of Commerce to put the full force of your collective judgment, intelligence, and inventiveness to the benefit of the general good. (Applause.) Now, some people think England is a miserable place still ; and so it is, for them. (Laughter and applause.) When I think of a hundred years ago and now, in a great city like Birmingham, I cannot help feeling that humanity is getting a better chance than ever it did before. (Hear, hear.) I am not one of those who glory in large accumulations in a few hands.

(Hear, hear.) You may tell me of many prosperous cities in which you can see too much misery. Now I do not believe there is a city on the face of the globe to-day in which there is a less unfair diffusion of wealth and opportunity than in the city of Birmingham to-day. (Applause.) I look around amongst the lords of industry in Birmingham for names that figure in the pages of Debrett as belonging to the ancient aristocracy. I look around for them here, and I think the Lord Bishop is the only representative. (Laughter.) What I like to see is an aristocracy which tests its virtue by its own achievements. (Applause.) Tested by such tests there is the grandest of all aristocracies in Birmingham. Within a few miles around us here—and it is no flattery to say so—there is the greatest centre of manufacture in metals that the world can show. As the Deputy Lord Mayor has said, there is nothing known of the largest triumphs you cannot make, and there are none of the smallest needs of humanity that you cannot supply.

Birmingham is a place we are all proud of, and there is a greater nobility about Birmingham to-day, because of that gathering 100 years ago—(Applause)—because, after all, industrial success has so many sharp edges that public spirit softens. The individual triumphs of the great captains of industry are all the nobler because they have all helped to make this great city what it is, and all classes so prosperous, so happy, so comfortable, and so proud of its corporate spirit and industry. Now, there is a dead weight upon us—the dead weight of armaments. (Hear, hear.) It would not hurt Birmingham if all the armaments of the world were destroyed to-morrow; so it is safe for me to say that humanity can never really release its giant energies until the armaments are destroyed. But this great champion of the peace of the world must always be the strongest, so long as the danger of brute force exists. (Applause.) A place in the sun! There is no room for honest ambitions in your geographical sun. But there is a sun in which there is unlimited room for progress and supremacy, a sun which does not still the competitive instincts of mankind—these will never be destroyed—but which transfers them

from the battlefield, and the slaughter by machinery on the high seas, into the emulations and rivalries of trade and commerce, science, and enterprise. (Applause.)

Now I cannot sit down without a word in reference to the greatest of all names in the history of Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain. (Loud applause.) He made the Colonial Office what it ought to be. (Applause.) He is one of the master builders of the Empire. (Applause.) His views may be right or wrong on this matter or that, but the splendour of his abilities, the purity of his aims, and the loftiness of his patriotism have lifted that great personality above the dust and clamour of party strife into the serene atmosphere of national esteem. (Loud applause.) I am proud to be here to-day. My appearance reminds you of the wonderful growth of the Empire. I come from a country in which, in 1783, not a single foot of a white settler had been planted. It is a country which, you will see, will have a great deal to say about the future of this Empire—(Hear, hear)—and the future of this world. (Hear, hear.) One hundred years ago the trading companies had a greater Empire than the Imperial Government; now on 13 millions of square miles 440 millions of human beings look up to the old flag of our race, which shelters, and protects, and benefits them all. Now I am proud to represent one of those great Dominions on this occasion. I offer you on behalf of the Government and of the people of Australia a thousand warm congratulations upon this hundred years of strenuous industrial effort and public spirit, and, looking forward to another hundred years, I see Birmingham still in the position of glory which she occupies to-day. (Loud applause.)

ADDRESS BY SIR ALBERT ROLLIT.

The Chairman then asked Sir Albert K. Rollit, LL.D., D.C.L., D.Litt., as a veteran Chamber of Commerce man, to give his Address.

Sir Albert, who was received with applause, said: My Deputy Lord Mayor, My Lord Bishop, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I realize after my introduction

to this great audience in the far-famed Town Hall of Birmingham, which has echoed the voices of John Bright and Cobden, how great is the honour of being referred to in such kindly and complimentary terms by your distinguished citizen, my old friend, the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., a colleague in the House of Commons for some twenty years or more, and of being asked to address you. And I thank you also for the opportunity of hearing the High Commissioner for Australia—of hearing both his oration and its ovation. (Applause.) He has dealt in the abstract with the subject which I am asked to treat more in the concrete—Chambers of Commerce—a subject which is indicated by the Chairman's reference to me as "A Chamber of Commerce man," and to which my long Presidency of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, and also of the London and Hull Chambers, and my Directorship of the Paris Chamber, have perhaps given me some little qualifications.

But, let me first congratulate your Birmingham Chamber on this celebration of its Centenary, the first such celebrations in England, in which the civic and Chamber authorities jointly partake, each recognising the service and help of the other—(Hear, hear.)—while I, as ex-Mayor of a great city and for many years President of the Municipal Corporations' Association of the United Kingdom, in which Birmingham was so ably represented by its former Town Clerk, Mr. E. Orford-Smith, acknowledge the example of your city to all Municipalities. Indeed, there are few such cities in the world, and nowhere such a concentrated civic centre as that of some one, or two, acres in its very midst, which by its splendid buildings, ministers both to culture and to commerce. (Applause.) In the supply, too, of the prime necessities of life to the people in purity and plenty—pure water, pure air, through so many public parks, pure knowledge, and intellectual recreation, through its Free Libraries, Museum, and the like, your city also ministers to the public health and strength, and so to the wealth—the common-wealth—of its great commercial community, and thus narrows the grim kingdoms of disease and death, and not only prolongs men's lives, but makes those

lives more livable—and all this with both direct and indirect value to your citizens, and with profit to both the ratepayers and consumers, as well as for the welfare of mankind, which, and not mere social wealth, is the wider and the better objective of our modern political economy. (Hear, hear.)

But to our Chambers of Commerce. Your Birmingham Chamber is one of the oldest in England, if not the very oldest, and as President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce I got to know the vast value of its leaders and of their work. (Applause.) It is now the third largest Chamber, with its 1,600 members, which it is hoped that this Celebration may increase to 2,000, and so make it the second Chamber, London, the first in size, but almost the youngest in age, now having nearly 7,000 members; and if so, this Centenary will be an epoch in the history of the Birmingham Chamber and City worthy of the visit of the Prime Minister. (Applause.) But sufficient of what the Chambers have—what have they done? For in these days men are rightly judged not by what they have but by what they do, and, though Posterity cannot do anything for us, we had best do what we can and ought for Posterity, for at least Posterity will do one thing for us—it will judge us. (Hear, hear.) Our Chambers are great economic organisations, which have helped to build up, during the last half-century, the most wonderful trade records that the world has ever known, the annual value of the volume of the over-seas' branch of which is now no less than some fourteen hundred millions of pounds sterling, while exports, imports, and re-exports all alike share in this phenomenal expansion of our external commerce, amounting to one-fifth of that of the whole world, and only rivalled by the similar and extraordinary growth of our home trade, and of our world-wide carrying trade, one-half the cargoes afloat being in transit in British bottoms. (Applause.) Such results ensue from individual energy and enterprise, but also from organised and united effort. (Hear, hear.) Chambers of Commerce have fostered this trading spirit, for *l'union fait la force*, union is strength. They have, through their many—and merry—meetings, focussed

attention on the conditions of Commerce ; one of which is hospitality such as yours, and may the days never come when dining will be a lost art and hospitality only an ancient virtue ; they have generated co-operative and united effort ; while by mutual intercourse, debates, and dining together, they have increased that mutual and that commercial knowledge which is the basis of business—(Hear, hear)—for, in present times, commerce must be regarded as the most learned of all professions, the most exacting in its varied demands upon time and mind, and one which demands the most modern weapons of intellectual precision, just as the rifle has superseded the blunderbuss, or, to go back further, the short sword and shield of the gladiator. (Applause.) Business cannot be transacted within the limited horizon of the Cabinet Minister, and a noble lord, who once asked what were the small dots all over an official return, had to have it explained to him that they were decimal points. (Laughter.) And, nowadays, trade organisation, both of commerce as a whole and of large individual businesses, is a condition of commercial success. My great townsman, Andrew Marvell, wrote : “ How much one man can do if he both act and know.” The rule-of-three will tell you how much more many such men can do in co-operation, each for all and all for each, by work co-operate to an end. And modern experience teaches that, for success, organisation is almost always absolutely essential. For instance, philanthropy is organised benevolence, and, as you can’t do the Samaritan without the oil and twopence—(Laughter)—organisation is the means to that beneficent end. So trade and commerce are organised work and industry ; and even religion, or perhaps I should say churches, are organised piety, culminating in the collection box. (Laughter.) And, to illustrate want of organisation, take our street traffic, both by vehicles and on foot, a disorganised mass of motors and of men, of the quick and the dead. (Laughter.) Few and inadequate are the rules of the road, and these rules are also dangerously different afloat and ashore, and nationally and internationally—(Hear, hear)—with the results illustrated by the two people crossing the road,

both of whom squinted, were cross-eyed, and so at cross purposes; they ran against each other, when one of them exclaimed: "I wish you'd look where you're going"; cried the other: "And I wish you'd go where you're looking." (Laughter.)

Next, let me ask what Chambers of Commerce are doing to justify themselves? Many hundreds of meetings are held by them in the year—most at home, many by Colonial, and some by British Chambers abroad. From them deputations attend Ministers, Heads of Government Departments, and Members of Parliament (many of whom are officially connected with the Chambers), and inform, and often teach and enlighten them—(Laughter)—and all of them have great regard for numbers; comparatively, any individual counts as a trifle. (Laughter.) Thus, through their resolutions, the Chambers of Commerce promote, support, and oppose legislation and administrative action. For instance, it was in response to a deputation from the Chambers to the President of the Board of Trade that he proposed in 1907 his Patents and Designs' Act, suggested originally by the Birmingham Chamber, which required British patents to be worked in Great Britain; and so British workmen found work to do—(Applause)—in return for the monopoly given by the State to the patentee. (Hear, hear.) The Act has been successful in stopping such monopolies without work being done under the patents, but a legal decision has limited this by throwing the onus of proving the absence of user and work on those who impeach such patents, instead of on the patentees to prove such user, of which they have the best, and sometimes the only, knowledge. Steps are now being taken by the Birmingham and other Chambers to remedy this flaw in a most proper Act, which prevents a useful invention being strangled, and compels the working of the patent in the interest of the public and our artisans. (Loud applause.) In more detail, the Chambers of Commerce afford to their members information, advice, and assistance on an infinity of subjects, through literature, trade journals, and otherwise—on foreign customs' duties, tariffs, and the like; they issue certificates of origin of goods, etc. They watch

local and national trade interests, railway rates and conditions of transport, such as carriage at owners' risk rates. They bring to book by cross-examination before Parliamentary Committees such Railway Magnates as the one who stated as a railway economic axiom that the test of a reasonable railway rate was one that the trade could bear without breaking. (Laughter.) Through their trade sections and committees they deal with a multitude of questions practically, and help the traders to deal with them, by interviewing railway and shipping companies, by protesting against the unfair actions of railway and shipping "rings" and their interference with the legitimate rights of the trader and shipper, and by negotiating for and helping to settle reasonable clauses in Bills of lading, Charter parties, and other shipping documents. Some of them, notably Birmingham, issue pronouncements, after careful investigation, on Imperial and Local Government, in order to secure not only economical, but efficient, expenditure, with a full sense that in spending departments, such as public education, the public health, water supplies, etc., parsimony is not true economy, but that wanton waste, and, still worse, any jobbery—which is robbery, and the jobber a robber—(Hear, hear)—must not be permitted to sap the foundations of honest trading and the public rights and interests—while realising that real public improvements are often necessarily costly, but may be recouped a thousand-fold by the production of even one industrial genius, such as your James Watt, your Dr. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, or a Wedgwood, who transferred practically a whole industry to his own country, or a Bessemer. (Applause.)

Then, Organisation has been carried further both nationally and internationally. In 1860 the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom was founded, of which I had the honour to be President for many years, being formed to focus the work of the local Chambers and to communicate their views and wishes to the Government and Departments of State, and to hold annual, and, more recently, autumnal meetings of representatives of the Chambers for the discussion of specific commercial subjects. In this new departure the

Birmingham and Hull Chambers were most active pioneers, the late Mr. Sampson Lloyd, M.P., of Birmingham, being one of its first Presidents, an office which he held for 18 years, while he was also an active member of the Council of the Birmingham Chamber. (Applause.) He strongly advocated an improved status for the Board of Trade, which the Chambers secured for it, as our Ministry of Commerce, in much more recent times. (Applause.) The Association is frequently consulted by the Government, the Board of Trade, and other Departments; its representatives are generally placed on Commissions and Departmental Committees on commercial subjects. For instance, when the Merchandise Marks' Parliamentary Committee was appointed I was a member of it, and the measure itself was suggested by the Birmingham Chamber to Mr. Mundella, M.P., then President of the Board of Trade. I also sat on the Joint Stock Companies', Bankruptcy, Hours of Railway Servants, and other such Committees, and also for several years on the Standing Advisory Committee of the Board of Trade on Commercial Intelligence, and I moved in the Commons and carried the resolution touching the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, with the support of the Chamber. Thus the Association is constantly in touch with what I may call the Laboratories of Legislation, and is able, in the earliest stages, to mould measures and amendments in a way which would be difficult, if not impossible, at later stages.

Now I ask—what have Chambers of Commerce done to influence Parliamentary action and legislation? As one illustration, let us take the development of our Canals and Waterways. The canal period of English engineering was, if not equal to that of some foreign countries, a great one. One relic of it is the word “navvy,” *i.e.*, “navigator,” which the canal makers bequeathed to their successors, the railway makers; and one great feat of the early canal makers was that which tunnelled Standedge for three miles between Yorkshire and Lancashire, through the Pennine Chain, the “backbone of England.” (Hear, hear.) But many of these canals have been acquired by the railway companies, and have

become disused, some in order to stifle competition, while some others have become obsolete or derelict, and few have retained their full utility.

But, recently, the Birmingham Chamber urged before the Association of Chambers of Commerce their restoration, and advocated the appointment of a Royal Commission on the subject, before which it offered valuable evidence, and this initiative resulted in a Report favouring the re-development of our canal system, on both national and local grounds, under a Central Board of Administration, commencing with a sort of quadrilateral of Grand Canals, uniting London, Bristol, Birmingham, Leeds, and Hull and the Humber. The execution of this plan has been pressed by Birmingham before the Chambers of Commerce, and is on the agenda paper for the coming autumnal meeting at Antwerp—in a country of object lessons in inland waterways and canalised rivers—and there is little doubt that the carrying out of such a scheme would be of great advantage for agricultural and heavy goods traffic, and a means of transport which might go far to solve the very vital question of railway rates and conditions, and such sub-questions as the excessive charges for goods carried at owner's risk, by means of wholesome competition. (Loud applause.)

Public Education, again, has always had the support of the Chambers of Commerce; the Technical Education movement sprang from Birmingham, and was launched by Mr. Mundella, President of the Board of Trade, at a meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, members of which served on the Royal Commission and Committees which brought the proposals into practical application. What a business-like contrast to the action of the Government in throwing the "whiskey moneys" on the floor of the House of Commons, first to be scrambled for, and then as a *dernier ressort* to aid Technical Education—as if to distil wisdom out of whiskey, genius out of gin, and business out of beer. (Laughter.)

Commercial Education has also been studiously promoted by the Chambers, and I have been glad to observe that in every branch and institution of its educational work Birmingham has included commercial education,

while its University has established degrees in commerce. (Applause.) The London Chamber has made commercial education *a tour de force*. It found education in both public and private schools defective—one great Insurance Office rejected a candidate for a clerkship whose abilities were certified by one of our greatest public schools, but, on trial, who made three orthographical mistakes in writing as many lines. Our city offices were filled with foreign clerks, who crowded out British ones, because of their knowledge of foreign languages and commercial subjects. The London Chamber established teaching and classes until they could be safely transferred to the City of London College, in which the Chamber is represented by myself, as Chairman of its Commercial Education Committee, and other members of the Council; and the Chamber's Certificate of Competency in commercial subjects is now sought by some 14,000 candidates annually. (Applause.) And those who obtain these certificates have now no difficulty in securing situations at the best salaries, City merchants giving them a preference, other things being equal. Indeed, the demand for such students has outgrown the supply, and thus a great service has been rendered to both employers and employed, the one receiving the assurance of competent service, the other the means of earning their daily bread—a great thing when you have got no bread. (Applause.)

Birmingham has its Industrial Arbitration Committee, as have other Chambers, and they have taken much interest in conciliation and arbitration in trade disputes, in substituting industrial peace and plenty for industrial warfare, in the shape of strikes and lock-outs, and with them starvation and suffering, and the breaking up of homes, and diversion of trade. We say to each side: "Strike—but hear!" You have the right to strike but better is it to make the might of right prevail over the right of might. In this direction the London Conciliation Board of the Chamber of Commerce, composed of equal numbers elected by the employers and employed respectively, and which appoints absolutely independent arbitrators, has done very good service to both the State and to the locality. It has arbitrated in many trade

disputes, prevented many strikes, and settled more, including a branch of the London Docks' strike of 1912, in which I was the Arbitrator. But above all, such peaceable adjustments gradually teach the duty and wisdom of legality of action—(Applause) of supplanting, it may be, the right of force by the force of right, of a sense of reason and equity, making all parties realise that law and equity are two things which God has joined together but which, too often, man has put asunder—(Laughter)—and that liberty to be enjoyed must be limited by law, for where law ends there tyranny begins, and the tyranny is the same, whether it be the tyranny of a monarch or of a multitude—of men or of womankind, of English or Irish—(Hear, hear)—nay, the tyranny of the multitude may be the greater, for it is a multiplied tyranny. (Applause.)

As to Legal Reforms, I can speak personally, and I hope not too egotistically. In County Court legislation the State owes very much to Chamber of Commerce men—to Mr. C. M. Norwood, M.P. for Hull, and the first President of the Association of Chambers, in securing a considerable increase of jurisdiction, while in 1903, after strenuous fighting in both Houses, I succeeded in passing my Act of that year, by which the jurisdiction of the County Courts was doubled and raised to £100, thus greatly facilitating the local administration of justice and decreasing the cost and delay of trials in London or elsewhere at a distance. (Applause.) Similar advantages have been secured by the Chambers through statutory facilities for Commercial Arbitration in place of litigation in commercial and other cases more suitable for the former domestic tribunal. (Hear, hear.) The draft of the Arbitration Consolidation and Amendment Act (1889), was submitted to the London Chamber, and London has for many years had its permanent Court of Arbitration, under the joint administration of the Chamber and the City Corporation, of which I have the honour to be Chairman. Other Chambers, as Birmingham, have Commercial Arbitration Standing Committees, their object being the decrease of the delays and expenses of litigation

and the settlement of commercial differences on lines likely to keep rather than lose business. (Hear, hear.)

As in the case of the Arbitration Act (1889), the Chambers have always favoured and fostered Consolidation Codification, and Simplification of our laws, instead of verbiage and repetition, and, like Pelion on Ossa, piles upon piles of statutes and cases. The procedure of Parliament in legislating may be satirised as first passing an Act to impose a tax, then an Act to amend the Act imposing a tax, then an Act to add certain clauses to the Act amending the Act imposing a tax, next an Act to explain the Act adding certain clauses to the Act amending the Act imposing the tax, and so *ad infinitum*. (Laughter.) Notwithstanding such tautologies everyone is presumed to know the law, and if they disobey it they are punished ; this is worse than the times of the worst of the Roman Emperors, Caligula, who fixed his laws so high on the lampposts that no one could read them, and then executed the defaulters. We are much more ingenious ; we bury our laws so deep down in statutes and cases that no one can get at them, and then assume full knowledge of them, and punish those who violate them. (Laughter.) Such procedure is almost as absurd as the procedure of the House of Commons itself, which instead of making time to amend our laws, draws an absolutely arbitrary and imaginary line between session and session—separated at times by only a couple of days—and then requires all legislation, in whatever stage, to be recommenced each session, which is just as if one of your business men wrote letters up to post time, and then, because he had still some few more letters to write, tore up all he had written in order to begin writing them again next morning and so on *de die in diem*. (Laughter.) I have myself moved and carried the continuance of a Port of London Bill, which afterwards became an Act, from one session to another, showing that there is no ground for such a rule, fit only for Sisyphus and his classical cask, which he kept pushing up a hill only to see it roll down again, or like that King of France, whose exploit was that His Majesty first marched up a hill and then marched down again. (Laughter.)

It seems almost a paradox to speak of the laws of Insolvency after my panygeric of trade prosperity. But, while I am a believer in the commercial morality of our country generally, and a disbeliever in canonical censures of it by deans and deacons who know little of the canons of practical business economy, and I take the rough test of how comparatively few cases of litigation arise out of the non-correspondence of the bulk delivered with the sale sample, amid the infinity of such sales. (Hear, hear.) There are, however, exceptions, such as the class of whom it may be said that it is not their interest to pay their principal nor their principle to pay their interest—(Laughter)—or of the foreigner who said of himself: “Two years since I came to England a friendless and penniless man, but, thanks to my own energy and enterprise, I leave it to-morrow twenty thousand pounds in debt.” (Loud laughter.) Well, I have tried to meet the deserts of such people and cases of “assets nil.” For laymen I may translate this into “No assets,” to prevent anyone writing me about it, just as a reader of a sporting paper, coming upon the phrase “Nihil fit,” wrote to the editor to enquire who Nihil was, who he fit, how much he fit for, and which won. (Laughter.) For such classes I passed in Parliament, with the support of the Chambers, the Bankruptcy Act (1900), making the discharge of bankrupts conditional on their estate paying ten shillings in the pound, unless they can prove that the failure to do so is due to misfortune or to causes for which they cannot fairly be held responsible—(Hear, hear); and, at the present time, the Chambers are supporting a Bill to amend your Mr. Joseph Chamberlain’s Bankruptcy Act (1883), and it is hoped some of my discharge penalties will be applied to commercial crimes. I also introduced and carried the Registration of Deeds of Arrangement Act, requiring private arrangements between debtors and their creditors to be registered for the information of the trading public, who were frequently defrauded by such private arrangements—(Hear, hear); to say nothing of the Customs’ Laws Amendment Act, before which, upon a charge of smuggling against any of the crew or others on board, the Revenue Authorities could seize any ship, and

imprison anyone, even any passenger, on board the vessel. (Laughter.) But we have changed all that, and many other things.

And here time compels me to close, but I think it due to Sir Edward Fithian, the late Secretary of the Association of Chambers, to add that by his knowledge and tact, and his able draughtsmanship, he has greatly helped the activities of Chambers of Commerce, and has deserved well of them; and I can say the same of our Mr. Musgrave, Secretary of the London Chamber, and of your able Secretary, Mr. Wright, who has conducted your Chamber's work so admirably and arranged so well this function of your Centenary. (Loud applause.)

Finally, then, Chambers of Commerce have always fought for peace, proclaiming that commerce is peace and peace is commerce, which is not quite, but near enough to, the truth, especially in these Balkanian times. (Hear, hear.) The idea of a Treaty of Arbitration between Great Britain and the United States was originally suggested by the Chambers of Commerce, and might have been useful, even in preventing proximate war, on more than one occasion—as in the Trent affair—since the Peace of Ghent, now also in celebration of its Centenary. And at one critical time I know that the Association of Chambers largely contributed to the good relations and the ultimate *Entente* between France and Great Britain. Owing partly to causes into which it is not necessary to enter, a feeling existed in Paris, where I then had a residence, that we in England did not take an interest in their great Exhibition of 1900, as we did in the case of the previous one at Bordeaux, a year or two before, which the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Walter Gilbey) and I visited as a deputation under the auspices of the Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce. To remove this misapprehension the Chambers of Commerce accepted the invitation of the Paris Chamber to hold its Autumnal Meeting in the Exhibition at Paris, as it has similarly visited other Continental capital cities, such as Liège, and is going to meet at Antwerp this year. (Hear, hear.) I may also mention here that Congresses of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire have also been held in London,

Canada, and Australia, with good effects. On arriving in Paris, greetings and a welcome from the President of the Republic (M. Loubet), the Minister of Commerce (M. Milleraud), and other dignitaries were most cordial, and we experienced the greatest hospitality, not only from the Paris Chamber of Commerce, but from President Loubet and his Ministers, at the Hotel de Ville from the Municipality of Paris, and notably from the British Chamber of Commerce and the Paris Chamber. (Applause.) This was one of the chief beginnings of the *Entente*, the wave following the ripples at Bordeaux, where the official visit of the Lord Mayor in state had also advanced matters. And, though we wish also for new friends, we stand by the old ones, and by the *Entente* as our chief security for the peace of Europe and the world. (Loud applause.) For, our prayer is still for peace in our time and for ever afterwards, even if we have to pray with sword in hand, for there are times when the sword alone can keep the sword in the scabbard. I recall that passage of Tacitus, the Roman historian, where he pictures the peace of Rome, the Pax Romana—Rome the capital, with her world-empire basking calmly at her feet. But this was a peace of subjection, a peace of force, a peace of the sword, the hilt of which was at Rome, and the point everywhere, including our own Britain. Our hopes are greater and better for our British Empire, for our Pax Britannica, a peace of liberty and law, of freedom and trade, of comity and commerce with all nations ; for Great Britain's peace of the Mother Country and of her circling Colonies, of constitutional and free institutions and of free men dispersed throughout the world, where none are for a party, but all are for the State. In this spirit, in which we have worked, we acclaim some signs, in place of portents of battle, murder, and sudden death, the dawn of that blessed day when the animosities shall perish, and only the humanities become as it were eternal, and when our Empire shall have, as it were, for its emblem a most splendid fabric made by men's hands, minds, and hearts, each of its several parts representing the Mother Country and her daughter-lands, with our ships passing, like

gigantic shuttles, to and fro upon an ocean loom, and weaving them all into one harmonious whole. (Loud applause.)

VOTES OF THANKS.

Mr. J. S. Taylor proposed a vote of thanks to Sir George Reid and Sir Albert Rollit for their presence and the speeches they had delivered on an occasion which would, he said, be ever memorable in the city and the Chamber. Sir George Reid was no stranger to Birmingham, and that day he had given them a golden speech, which would inspire them with high hope and confidence for the future of the Chamber. Sir Albert Rollit was well-known to them because of his work in connection with the Chambers of Commerce, and they had listened with great pleasure to his address. They were honoured by the presence of those two gentlemen, and gave them unstinted thanks for their contributions to the well being of the Chamber. The past had taught them the value of self-reliance. Their outlook was to the future, and they must profit from the worthy thoughts and words of their friends. They felt they were destined to advance, and if they realised their hopes, it would be because of the whole-hearted co-operation of the trading community. Let everyone do the part he could do best, and hold out both hands to all who needed advice and assistance in the daily conduct of their duties. They wanted young men to come forward to do the work at their hand, and take their share of responsibility in life. (Applause.)

Mr. George Shipway seconded the resolution. No Birmingham man, he said, could listen without emotion to the generous tribute which one Colonial Secretary of Australia had tendered to Birmingham's great citizen, and no one in the presence of Sir George Reid, for some time Premier of New South Wales, and later Premier of the Commonwealth of Australia, could forget that a Birmingham man, a bone and wood turner, became the Sir Richard Parkes, five times Premier of New South Wales, called the "Father of the Federation," and, like

Sir George Reid, one of the most commanding figures in the history of that great country. Mr. Shipway mentioned the services rendered to Birmingham by Sir Josiah Mason, by the Tangyes, and by Cadbury Bros., and urged that there in that hall all present should resolve that in the conduct of their business they would endeavour to be worthy of the city and of the men who had preceded them. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried with enthusiasm.

A vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor for granting the use of the Town Hall and to Alderman Bowater for presiding at the meeting was moved by the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., seconded by Mr. F. B. Goodman, J.P., and carried with acclamation.

WELL-ATTENDED FUNCTIONS.

All the functions were exceedingly well-attended by a large number of members of the Chamber, as well as by nearly two hundred guests from all parts of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to obtain anything approaching a complete list of those who were present, and we must, therefore, be content with the following, which contains the names of gentlemen who were present at one or more of the functions during the day :—

The Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P. (His Majesty's Prime Minister), who was accompanied by his Private Secretary (Mr. M. Bonham Carter).

The Rt. Hon. Sydney Buxton, M.P. (President of the Board of Trade), who was accompanied by his Private Secretary (Mr. J. A. Webster).

Alderman W. H. Bowater (Deputy Lord Mayor), the Bishop of Birmingham, the Vice-Chancellor of the University (Dr. Gilbert Barling), the Mayor and Town Clerk of West Bromwich, the Mayor and Town Clerk of Smethwick, the Mayor and Town Clerk of Wednesbury, the Mayor of Dudley, Lord Norton, the Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., the Rt. Hon. J. Austen Chamberlain,

M.P., the Rt. Hon. J. W. Wilson, M.P., the Rt. Hon. Sir Albert Spicer, Bart., M.P., Sir Francis W. Lowe, M.P., Mr. Ebenezer Parkes, M.P., Mr. R. A. Cooper, M.P., Mr. D. M. Mason, M.P., Mr. Alfred Bird, M.P., Mr. H. W. Sambidge, J.P. (President of the Chamber), Mr. J. S. Taylor (Vice-President), Mr. George Shipway, J.P. (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. G. Henry Wright, F.C.I.S. (Secretary), Mr. Thos. Potter (Assistant Secretary), the Town Clerk (Mr. E. V. Hiley), the Stipendiary (Lord Ilkeston), the Chief Constable (Mr. C. H. Rafter), Sir Whitworth Wallis, Mr. C. S. Court (Postmaster), the Rector of Birmingham (Canon Willink), Rev. S. M. Berry, Rev. J. H. Jowett, M.A., D.D., Sir R. M. Simon, M.D., Mr. Chas. Hyde, Mr. Ernest Sandford (Lord Mayor's Secretary), the Editor "Daily Post," the Editor "Daily Mail," the Editor "Gazette," the Editor "Evening Despatch," Alderman F. W. Cook (Dudley), Mr. J. H. Walmsley (Superintendent Inspector of Factories), Alderman F. C. Clayton, Mr. Thomas Worthington (Director of Commercial Intelligence, Board of Trade), Mr. G. J. Stanley, C.B., C.M.G. (Assistant Secretary of the Commercial Department of the Board of Trade), Mr. E. C. Cunningham (Secretary of H.M. Customs and Excise), Mr. W. Temple Franks (Comptroller-General of Patents), Sir Guy Granet (General Manager of the Midland Railway Co.), Mr. Frank Potter (General Manager of the Great Western Railway Co.), Mr. Henry Evans (Chief Goods Manager of the Midland Railway Co.), Mr. W. A. Roberts (Chief Goods Manager of the Great Western Railway Co.), Mr. J. G. Humphries (District Goods Manager of the London and North-Western Railway Co.), Mr. J. Gold (District Goods Manager of the Midland Railway Co.), Mr. H. L. Bowles (District Goods Manager of the Great Western Railway Co.), Mr. H. D. Verrinder (District Superintendent of the Midland Railway Co.), Mr. S. J. Johnson (Divisional Superintendent of the Great Western Railway Com.), the Rt. Hon. Sir George Houstoun Reid, P.C., K.C.M.G., K.C. (High Commissioner for Australia), the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie (High Commission for New Zealand), the Consul-General for the Dominican Republic, the Consul-General for Ecuador, the Consul-General for Monaco,

the Consul-General for Montenegro, the Consul-General for San Marino, the Colombian Charges d'Affaires, Lieut.-Col. the Hon. Sir Newton J. Moore, K.C.M.G. (Agent-General for Western Australia), the Hon. Sir John McCall (Agent-General for Tasmania), the Hon. Peter McBride (Agent-General for Victoria), the Hon. A. A. Kirkpatrick (Agent-General for South Australia), Mr. J. H. Turner (Agent-General for British Columbia), Mr. A. Bowder (Representative of New Brunswick), Mr. W. L. Griffith (Secretary to the High Commissioner for Canada), the following members of the Executive Council of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, viz. :—Sir Algernon F. Firth, Bart. (President), the Rt. Hon. Lord Southwark, Sir Frank Forbes Adam, C.I.E., Sir Albert K. Rollit, LL.D., D.C.L., D.Litt., Sir W. E. B. Priestley, M.P., Mr. C. T. Needham, M.P., Mr. J. A. Aiton, Mr. G. Palliser Martin, Mr. T. C. Moore, J.P., Mr. S. B. Wheway, J.P., Mr. Alfred Sykes, J.P., and Mr. R. B. Dunwoody (Secretary); the following members of the Consular body in Birmingham, viz. :—Mr. L. T. H. Hiorth (Vice-Consul for Norway and President of the Birmingham Consular Association), Mr. J. B. Hale (Vice-Consul for Argentine Republic), Mr. A. Myers (Consul for Belgium), Mr. E. C. Lord (Vice-Consul for Chile), Mr. Walter Schürhoff (Consul for Colombia), Mr. A. H. Cata (Consul for Cuba), Mr. J. J. Button (Vice-Consul for Denmark), Mr. Howard Robinson (Vice-Consul for the Dominican Republic), Mr. C. T. Menke (Consul for Germany), Mr. Albert Phillips (Consul for Greece), Mr. Philip Cohen (Consul for Honduras), Mr. E. H. Kannreuther (Consular-Agent for Italy), Mr. Allan Whitfield (Consul for Liberia), Mr. Gustavo Schürhoff (Consul for Mexico), Mr. F. Hickinbotham (Consul for Panama), Mr. A. S. Chovil (Consul for Paraguay), Mr. Hermann Schürhoff (Consul for Spain), Mr. A. H. Payton (Consul for Turkey), Mr. Albert Halstead (Consul for the United States of America), and Prof. C. E. Martineau (Consul for Portugal), Mr. J. E. Ray (Canadian Trade Commissioner in Birmingham), Mr. J. H. R. Meyer; representatives of the following Chambers of Commerce, viz. :—Anglo-Belgian (in London), Arbroath, Bath, Batley, Blackburn, Bradford, Bridgwater, Brighton,

Bristol, Bury, Burnley, Cheltenham, Cleckheaton, Croydon, Derby, Dover, Dublin, Dudley, Edinburgh, Gloucester, Goole, Gt. Grimsby, Halifax, Isle of Wight, Huddersfield, Kendal, Kidderminster, Hull, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, London, Luton, Macclesfield, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Morley, Netherlands (in London), Newcastle-on-Tyne, North Staffordshire, Norwegian (in London), Nottingham, Ossett, Port Talbot, Reading, Rotherham, Sheffield, Swedish (in London), Trowbridge, Walsall, Warrington, Wolverhampton, Worcester, and Yeadon ; Sir Hallewell Rogers, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Prof. W. J. Ashley, Prof. A. W. Kirkaldy, Mr. H. C. Field, J.P., Mr. F. B. Goodman, J.P., Mr. H. J. Gristwood, Mr. Stanley Johnstone (President of the Jewellers' and Silversmiths' Association), Mr. G. J. Wake, Mr. Geo. Barker, Mr. A. B. Mitchell, Mr. T. A. Bayliss, J.P., Sir Gerard A. Muntz, Councillor J. B. Burman, Mr. S. A. Edwards, Mr. J. F. Sjögren, Mr. J. Martyn Smith, Mr. Oliver A. Smith, Mr. C. J. Hampton, Mr. A. E. Wiley, Mr. G. O'dell, Mr. Tapp, Mr. Blackshaw, Mr. J. W. Bayliss, Mr. D. G. Peterson, Mr. Eric L. Heathcote, Mr. R. A. Chattock, Mr. Richard Green, Mr. Charles Willetts, Mr. Harold Willetts, Councillor C. F. Gaunt, Mr. John Smith, Mr. C. R. Bloxedge, Mr. Thos. Bland, Mr. Joseph Hood, J.P., Mr. A. H. Gibson, Mr. E. B. Winn, Mr. Percy W. Hudson, Mr. H. A. Lamplugh, Mr. Arthur Short, Mr. C. Herbert Smith, Mr. H. H. Russell, Mr. John Weatherhead, Mr. W. L. Powell, J.P., Mr. Ludford C. Docker, Mr. Ernest Stevens, Mr. T. H. Gough, Mr. Walter J. Ginder, Mr. H. M. Grant, Mr. A. E. Bond, Mr. R. H. Best, Mr. R. D. Best, Mr. B. B. Blackburn, Councillor Harrison Barrow, Mr. G. F. Patterson, Mr. A. M. Thompson, Mr. J. H. Kirk, Mr. W. H. Merrifield, Mr. Wilfrid Hill, Mr. George Turner, Mr. Walford H. Turner, Mr. George Barnard, Mr. W. A. King, Mr. Jos. Ludlow, Mr. Gilbert C. Vyle, Mr. R. G. Evered, Mr. J. G. Chillingsworth, Mr. J. Amos Lloyd, Mr. F. H. Pepper, Mr. A. Scott, Mr. W. H. Bowater, Mr. R. J. Dingley, Mr. L. C. Tipper, Mr. A. J. Walter, Mr. B. Ratcliff Padmore, Mr. W. S. Bradley, Mr. W. A. Mackinnon, Mr. Norman Tailby, Mr. Frank Haseler, Mr. J. H. Francis, Mr. Thos. Mason, Mr. H. J. Roper, Alderman Hubert

Bewlay, Mr. A. Ashton Smith, Mr. F. Rathbone, Mr. W. H. Bagley, Mr. W. Marshall Freeman, Mr. H. Kerry Wingrove, Mr. G. H. Hughes, Mr. Frank Sale, Mr. Alex. McKechnie, Mr. J. P. Achurch, Mr. Philip Achurch, Mr. A. J. Pepper, Mr. H. Crisford, Mr. J. M. Nicolson, Mr. J. F. Green, Mr. H. Foster, Mr. S. Usher, Mr. F. E. Usher, Mr. Alfred Fairley, Mr. J. Turnbull, Mr. E. Strange Lang, Mr. W. S. Tunbridge, Mr. Ernest A. Smith, Mr. Herbert A. Pepper, Mr. C. B. Day, Mr. D. T. Harris, Mr. E. J. Parker, Mr. E. B. Maddox, Councillor A. W. Auster, Mr. H. W. Edmunds, Mr. E. C. Keay, Mr. J. Keay, Mr. E. H. Bayliss, Alderman W. Smedley Aston, Mr. A. H. Westwood, Mr. J. Firth Mellor, Mr. H. G. Sadgrove, Mr. D. Story, Mr. J. W. Earle, Mr. John Sutcliffe, Mr. Fredk. Mountford, Mr. T. H. Ash, Mr. R. H. Burman, Mr. Joseph Ansell, Mr. Joseph Boston, Mr. E. O. Boston, Mr. J. T. Homer, Mr. Arthur Birkbeck, Mr. A. B. Reeves, Mr. G. H. Dugard, Mr. R. W. Maxwell, Mr. F. M. Hawnt, Mr. G. S. Morley, Mr. J. Walter G. Hill, Mr. F. Wright, J.P., Mr. W. H. South, Mr. J. R. MacIntosh, Mr. H. W. Nock, Mr. G. J. Eveson, Mr. T. Turner, Mr. H. Lakin-Smith, Mr. Howard Jones, Mr. P. J. Hobson, Mr. T. Moseley, Mr. J. K. Hussey, and also representatives of the following firms :—Messrs. Rainsford and Lines, Ltd., Messrs. Hinks, Wells and Co., the Weldless Steel Tube Co., Ltd., Messrs. C. Akrill and Co., Ltd., Messrs. Agar Bates, Neal, and Co., Messrs. Muntz's Metal Co., Ltd., Messrs. J. A. Phillips and Co., Ltd., Messrs. Harris and Sheldon, Ltd., Messrs. Henry Milward and Sons, Ltd., Messrs. Barwells, Ltd., Messrs. Hoskins and Sewell, Ltd., Messrs. S. Thornley, Ltd., Messrs. E. Whitehouse and Son, Messrs. Chance and Hunt, Ltd., Messrs. Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd., Messrs. Wm. Newman and Sons, Ltd., Messrs. Alfred Adams and Co., Messrs. Wm. Suckling and Sons, the Dennison Watch Case Co., Messrs. J. Ashford and Sons, Ltd., Messrs. Mitchells and Butlers, Ltd., Messrs. Bradley and Co., Ltd., Messrs. Wilson, Carter, and Pearson, Ltd., Messrs. Brown and Ward, Ltd., Messrs. Setten and Durward, Messrs. B. M. Cotton and Co., Messrs. W. Canning and Co., Messrs. Canning and Wildblood, Ltd., Messrs. Evans and Adlard, the Worthington Pump Co.,

Ltd., Messrs. A. E. Godrich and Co., Messrs. C. Collins, Ltd., Messrs. John Walsh and Co. (Birmingham), Ltd., Messrs. Griffiths and Browett, Messrs. Coates and Co., and many others.

THE LUNCHEON.

After the public meeting in the Town Hall, a luncheon was held at the Grand Hotel. The Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., presided, and was supported at the high table by the President of the Board of Trade (the Right Hon. Sydney Buxton, M.P.), Sir Algernon F. Firth, Bart. (President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce), Lord Southwark (President of the London Chamber of Commerce), the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie (High Commissioner for New Zealand), the Bishop of Birmingham (the Right Rev. Dr. Russell Wakefield), Sir George Reid, Sir A. K. Rollit, Alderman W. H. Bowater, Mr. H. W. Sambidge, and Dr. Gilbert Barling.

The Chairman proposed the toast of "The King," which was drunk with enthusiasm.

MR. SYDNEY BUXTON.

Mr. Sydney Buxton, President of the Board of Trade, proposing the toast of "British Chambers of Commerce and Imperial Trade," said: Mr. President and Gentlemen,—The toast I have to propose is that of "British Chambers of Commerce and Imperial Trade." You were good enough rather over a year ago to ask me as your guest at your annual dinner. Unfortunately—I think it was the coal strike; at all events, through something of urgency—I was prevented from attending and I think it is kind of you, in spite of my failure, to be good enough to ask me to come down on the present occasion. You are having a very strenuous day. You had a meeting this morning, and you have listened to Sir Albert Rollit and Sir George Reid; and you have some other functions in the course of the day. Therefore, I shall only detain you for a very short time. At the same time, I do desire to say a few words in proposing the toast you have been good enough to place in my hands. This

luncheon is only a prelude to the speeches this evening in regard to the Centenary of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, and the best advice I can give you at the present moment regarding the Prime Minister's speech is to "wait and see." (Laughter.) I welcome, as President of the Board of Trade, this opportunity of coming into personal contact and of addressing the Chambers of Commerce throughout the country. I think that it tends to bring the Board of Trade—the commercial department of the Government—into closer touch with the Chambers of Commerce—the commercial centres of our trade and commerce. (Hear, hear.) I know that such occasions, so far as we are concerned, are advantageous to us, and I think they may be advantageous to you. I am especially glad to come to such a great industrial and commercial centre as this, the capital of the Midlands, and to say that the relations between the Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce are of a most cordial character. (Hear, hear.)

I am especially glad to have the opportunity of congratulating the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on its Centenary. I come from a small place called London—(laughter)—and I envy, and genuinely envy, the civil, municipal, political, and commercial communities such as I find in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and such places—the community of thought and of interest which you have in these great provincial cities. (Hear, hear.) You all, quite irrespective of party, or anything of that nature, are able in these matters to be proud of the dignity and the greatness and the progress of the city of which you yourselves are citizens; and you have, especially in Birmingham, a great roll of statesmen, among whom not the least is our friend Mr. Chamberlain—(Applause)—and our respected friend on the right, Mr. Jesse Collings—(Hear, hear)—a roll of statesmen, municipal reformers, merchants, and commercial men of which any city may be proud. But, unfortunately, in London—I suppose it is because it is so great and so vast—at all events, in London, if you are asked, "Who is your next-door neighbour?" your invariable answer is, "I don't know, and I don't care." (Laughter.)

And I envy, therefore, these great centres of industry and commerce, and feel we have to regret very much that we have not the same spirit of citizenship and patriotism in London itself. I congratulate the Chamber of Commerce, now, I think, the oldest Chamber of Commerce in the country. I am not quite sure whether my friend on my right (Mr. Jesse Collings) was the first President or not. (Laughter.) I have not so far got him to own up to it—(laughter)—but, at all events, you were wiser in your generation than many of your neighbours, because I am sure you have felt, as other towns and Chambers of Commerce who have followed your example have felt, that in these Chambers of Commerce you do get what is lacking in the individual trader or merchant, and you get the opportunity of meeting together, for the general interest and the general advancement; you have the opportunity also of bringing influence—I will not say upon the Board of Trade—(laughter)—but in other directions—(Hear, hear)—and you have, especially in a town like Birmingham, where you have an infinite variety of industries, a greater opportunity of utilising the best purposes of Chambers of Commerce, and you become, in the best sense of the terms, first the guardians, and secondly the mouthpiece of industry and commerce. (Applause.) You are celebrating here your 100th Anniversary. Gentlemen, I am not now going to touch—the time for that will be this evening—upon the developments and extraordinary changes which have taken place in every way during the last 100 years. I have no doubt that in spite of it all you have in your midst, even in Birmingham, a certain number of croakers, who are always talking of the good old times. (Laughter.) I have no doubt that some time after the Flood Mr. and Mrs. Noah would talk with Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and tell them of the good old times they used to have before the Flood. (Laughter.) I have no doubt that Noah very often said to his sons, “You ought to have seen the pterodactyls we had before the Flood.” (Laughter.) I am not one of those who hold that view. My view is expressed in the old jingle:—

“The good and ancient days, let others prate;

I thank the heavens I was born so late.” (Laughter.)

I am sure that you of the Chambers of Commerce feel yourselves that the immense strides that have been made are due largely in Birmingham to the efforts of your municipality, and of its commerce, and its Chamber of Commerce (Applause.) You and the other Chambers of Commerce to which the toast refers have enormously improved and developed with the course of time, and I think I may say that we, for the moment representing the Board of Trade, have also developed, and I hope improved—(Hear, hear)—and that we have appreciated, and especially of late, more than we used to do, our duties and opportunities. (Applause.)

I need hardly say, especially in the presence of my friend in the chair, that I do not propose to enter into any controversial question—(laughter)—and I will not discuss with him the merits of Free Trade, and whatever it is he calls the opposite. (Loud laughter.) But quite apart from that, I do feel, and feel very strongly, that the old policy of *laissez faire* and of masterly inactivity on the part of a Government Department interested in and responsible for trade and commerce is, I am glad to say, a thing of the past. (Applause.) I do hold, and hold strongly, that it is the duty and the business of the Board of Trade, both with regard to legislation and administration, especially in these days—this era of strenuous competition—to do their very best, so far as they properly and legitimately can, to assist trade and commerce in every direction. (Hear, hear.)

I am not going on the present occasion to enter into any details as to the operations of the Board of Trade in connection with commerce and trade, and especially in reference to its connection with Chambers of Commerce. We are always, I think, in close touch with them, and perhaps they will allow me to say that I was gratified the other day, when attending a dinner of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, at which my friend, Sir Algernon Firth, presided—(Hear, hear)—he said that he had found—I am afraid he said somewhat to his surprise—that when he had had to deal with the Board of Trade, he had found them thoroughly accessible, desirous of assisting in every way they could,

desirous of giving every information they could, and desirous also of learning. (Applause.) I can seriously assure you—and especially I can assure my friend there—that is the policy they desire to carry out. (Applause.) I am glad to know, as you know, and it has been of very great assistance to us, that we have an Advisory Committee of commercial men interested in commerce and industry, of which my friend Mr. Parkes, one of your members, is a very valued member. I am glad to be able to say that we are now to appoint a new Advisory Committee, and after the consideration of representations made to me by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and others, I was glad to be able to meet their views, and enlarge the terms of reference of the Committee, so that it will in the future be still more valuable than it has been in the past, and give greater opportunities to Chambers of Commerce to bring their views before the Board of Trade. (Applause.)

The Foreign Office has lately been anxious, as I am sure you realise, with us, to meet these matters of information, and they are instructing their Consuls in the direction, I am sure, you would desire—(Hear, hear)—namely, that so far as they can they shall give information in regard to particular points, and in reply to the queries of Chambers of Commerce and others in connection with the matters and trades of the countries they represent. (Hear, hear.) And I am glad to say my friend says they do. (Hear, hear.) I am sure in the future we shall have even better information and better opportunities for trade given to us through the reports of our Consuls in that way. (Applause.) I have spoken so far of trade and commerce. The Board of Trade is a great department, having a great many duties, under which, and I think occasionally in other ways, it is able to give some assistance to the public and to commerce. And I hope I may say that the other day, when you had your great industrial difficulty of a strike prolonged for a long period, that we were able, through our Chief Industrial Commissioner, to give some material assistance in bringing the parties together, and putting an end to that disastrous conflict. (Hear, hear.) I hope these clouds have passed away, and that the agreement under which a resumption of work has taken

place will work satisfactorily, and that any bitterness or acrimony that has arisen will disappear as time goes on. (Hear, hear.) I cannot help feeling—it is too big a question to discuss after lunch—that the country as a whole would desire that some better means should be found, at all events, at the initial stages of these disputes, some better means should be found than the brute arbitrament of strikes to settle these disputes between labour and capital. (Hear, hear.)

While I am on that side of the Board of Trade's work I may say I have had the opportunity this morning, when you were listening to Sir George Reid and Sir A. K. Rollit—I daresay I should have been better employed listening to them, too—I took the opportunity, knowing they would speak at some length, of visiting the Labour Exchange and the Divisional Office. What I want to say is, I have a desire on behalf of the Board of Trade, on my own behalf, and especially on behalf of my local officers connected with the Board of Trade Labour Exchange, cordially to thank the various employers of labour throughout Birmingham and district for the very friendly way in which they co-operate with us, and I wish to thank the municipality, through you, for the assistance they have give to our Labour Exchanges. (Hear, hear.) The toast I have to propose is that of "The Chambers of Commerce," which I am glad to think play their part, and increasingly play their part, in the commercial life of this country. They are up to date, I think, energetic, and they know what they ought to do, and I think we may say that generally of our merchants and our traders. I think they know the line they should take, and they put their back into their work. I heard the other day—I hope the Bishop will allow me to quote it—I heard the other day—I don't think it was himself—the case of a clergyman of a vacillating mind—which I am sure the Bishop has not, I have known him long enough to know that—who was offered some preferment. He could not make up his mind whether to accept it or not. A friend of his whom he had consulted called the next morning to see what was the result. The friend said to the maid at the door, "Where is the master?" "Oh!" she said, "he's in his study

seeking Spiritual guidance!" "And where is the mistress?" "She upstairs packing." (Laughter.) I am sure, in the Bishop's presence, the Chambers of Commerce do not sufficiently seek Spiritual guidance, but turn their attention to packing. (Laughter and applause.)

I have great pleasure in proposing the toast of "The British Chambers of Commerce and Imperial Trade," and I couple it with the name of Sir Algernon Firth, President of the Association of Chambers of Commerce. (Applause.)

MR. JESSE COLLINGS.

The Chairman (Mr. Jesse Collings): I must express my pleasure that the President of the Board of Trade referred to the Consular reports. I read them regularly, and I cannot over-estimate their value to business men. I would recommend the Council of the Birmingham Chamber to pay more attention in their monthly paper to the recommendations and the remarks of the Consuls. I now call upon Sir Algernon Firth to respond to the toast.

SIR ALGERNON FIRTH.

Sir Algernon Firth said he could assure them that it was a great pleasure to him to be in Birmingham on that occasion to respond to the toast of "British Chambers of Commerce and Imperial Trade." He thought he might say that they—representatives of Chambers of Commerce—were greatly indebted to Mr. Buxton for the very able, courteous, and friendly way in which he had proposed the toast. He always found that the gentlemen connected with the Board of Trade could teach him a great deal about any question he went to consult them about; and so long as the commercial interests of the country were in the hands of these gentlemen, guided by such a courteous, accessible, and able gentleman as Mr. Buxton, they would have nothing to complain of. (Hear, hear.) They all congratulated the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce most sincerely upon attaining its one hundredth anniversary of its formation. (Hear, hear.)

They rejoiced in the amount of work and influence that the Chamber had been able to do and to exercise in the past. They wished it another two hundred or three hundred years of equal, and even greater, importance, and on behalf of the Association he represented he could only say that they hoped they would continue to have in the future, as they had had in the past, their guidance and co-operation in all those matters that came before them. He thought that the strength of the Chamber of Commerce lay firstly in its efficiency and energy for local service. That was the first thing that any Chamber of Commerce should consider. But that, however, was not enough. They must, secondly, use their power and influence, and extend their co-operation for national aims and purposes. (Applause.)

The complexity of modern business, the strenuousness of foreign competition, the necessity for securing the highest possible production, both in manufactures and agriculture, called for co-operation, for consolidation, and for consultation. (Hear, hear.) New forces, new problems, and new methods called for their constant vigilance. No man was equal to dealing with them all absolutely alone. (Hear, hear.) They needed to discuss, and throw light upon, all these problems, which were continually coming forward. He wished them to let him point out that he did not think that any Chamber of Commerce man should estimate the value of his Chamber of Commerce by the standard whether it would save him a pound or two in railway rates or in telephone charges. (Hear, hear.) Could the Chamber of Commerce advance the common good? Could it be of any good to the city or the community amongst which it existed? Could it help in the solution of those problems, which were coming forward all the time? Could it encourage the highest ideals of citizenship and public service? If it could, then it was worth all their support—(Applause)—and constant efforts. He wanted them to get the most value from their Chambers of Commerce, and, speaking of Chambers of Commerce generally, he thought they did give value. If he were in the position of their President, he would say, "Raise the subscription of the Birmingham

Chamber of Commerce to five guineas." (Laughter, and hear, hear.) The amount of service, he assured them, which he saw that their Chamber rendered to its members staggered him. (Hear, hear.) It astounded him that they could give it for a guinea. He thought they ought to value that service, and pay far more than they did for it. As Mr. Taylor had said very well that morning, they should endeavour to get in their Chamber of Commerce the best brains and the best talent at work, and, above all, they should try and catch them young. (Applause.) It was the young men they had got to catch and interest in the future. They should endeavour to interest them in the Chambers of Commerce, and make it a power amongst the thousands locally.

Another word about Imperial trade. Mr. Buxton did not say much about it, and he was not going to say much either. But there was one point above all others which he wished to urge upon them, because he saw representatives of other Chambers of Commerce present that day. It was this: They must realise that the future well-being and the future happiness of the people of the world depended more upon the development and the conservation of the earth's resources than they did upon laws, and constitutions, and the so-called more equitable distribution of wealth. (Hear, hear.) The increase of the natural wealth of this country and of this Empire—their soil, their mines, and their forests—was what they as Chambers of Commerce ought to keep attention directed to. (Applause.) That was what would diminish the cost of living. It was only by the husbandry of the soil that the world would be able to support the enormously increasing numbers of its population. They Britishers had vast areas of territory under their control. What they were capable of producing from agriculture and husbandry no man could guess. (Hear, hear.) They knew that they included every clime and every soil, and therefore they were capable of producing every product man required—probably far in excess of his requirements. (Applause.) The development of these possessions would have the greatest possible effect in the future, not only upon themselves, but upon the whole world.

The problem above all others that is at the present time agitating men's minds, not only in this country, but all over the world, is the increased cost of living. To increase the production of commodities is the surest and, in fact, the only way to solve this question. (Hear, hear.) The solution of this question will not only decrease the cost of living, but it will create a continually increasing demand for manufactures which, not only we, but the whole world, will be called upon to supply. If we neglect as a nation to recognise the need for such action, we are not fulfilling the trust that the possession of our magnificent Empire entails. Continuing, he said he was delighted the other day to know that the Government had proposed to appropriate three million pounds sterling for the growing of cotton in the Soudan. (Hear, hear.) We might not want the cotton ourselves, but there was not a business man anywhere who did not rejoice that the Government was prepared to recognise the need for this commodity, and was prepared to find the funds. Policies such as this they wanted stimulating, and it was up to Chambers of Commerce to encourage it. He was sure this was the surest way to render secure that Imperial trade they had just been toasting, and he was sure such extensions would increase our well being, and would prove a certain guarantee, not only of the future of this country, but of the whole Empire. (Loud applause.)

LORD SOUTHWARK.

Lord Southwark proposed the toast of "His Majesty's Dominions." He said it gave him personal gratification to express his pleasure and delight at sitting under the presidency of his old friend, Mr. Jesse Collings, with whom he entered Parliament in 1880. This was the first time he had had the pleasure of meeting him in his ancient borough of Birmingham, and this little personal gratification, he hoped, would not be considered out of order. As President of the London Chamber of Commerce, he could say it gave his colleagues and himself great pleasure to come to Birmingham and rejoice over this hundredth

celebration of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce—a Chamber they highly appreciated for the services it had rendered in the past, and for the lessons it had given to them and to other Chambers, and they had come there with their hearts as full of the desire for their success and prosperity as any guests they would entertain that day. (Applause.) The duty he had to perform was to ask them to drink the toast of “His Majesty’s Dominions.” They must all rejoice at the great strides that had been made in recent years with regard to the Dominions. It was only a few years ago that, in referring to our Dominions, we were only able to mention Canada. We could now refer to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Under the new arrangement each of these Dominions sent to us statesmen of the highest order and greatest popularity. They had received most cordial welcome in this country, and we had appreciated the good tendency of the new arrangement. They had had an example of it that day in the speech of their right hon. friend, Sir George Reid, who had learned more in the few years he had been in this country than some statesmen had learned in the whole of their experience. He (Lord Southwark) supposed that the President of the Board of Trade had hardly had the experience of Sir George Reid during the comparatively short time he had been High Commissioner here. They must not forget Lord Strathcona, who had done so much for Canada. Then there was Sir Richard Solomon. They knew the great services he had rendered in the formation of the Government of South Africa. They had with them that day the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, and they were all glad to see him. By the new arrangement, his Lordship continued, we sent to our Dominions our best men as our representatives. They could not forget the Duke of Connaught, who, they hoped, would continue his good work in Canada. They had Lord Gladstone in South Africa, Lord Liverpool in New Zealand, and Lord Denman in Australia.

With regard to the Chamber of Commerce, they had heard so much about it that it would be difficult to say anything that would not be repetition. But this he

could take credit for—that in the new arrangement with the Colonies we, in this country, could claim some share in the work. The holding of conferences and the formation of the new Imperial body had been the means of bringing all the Colonies together in one united Chamber. In a commercial unity like that they must all rejoice to see this development in our Colonies, and to know that our representatives—distinguished, and able men—were doing so much to improve the trade and prosperity of our Empire. (Applause.)

HON. THOMAS MACKENZIE.

The Hon. Thomas Mackenzie (High Commissioner for New Zealand) responded, and said that he personally esteemed it a very great compliment to the Dominion he represented that his name should have been associated with that very important toast. Before replying to the able speeches they had just heard delivered he desired to tender to their President his very great thanks for the pleasure that he (the President) had given him through the works which he had been good enough to publish to them. His work regarding the tenure of land, and bringing into closer usefulness and wider production the territory of this and other countries had been greatly appreciated, even beyond the shores of this country. (Applause.) The speech delivered by Sir Algernon Firth was one full of matter for thought and contemplation. (Hear, hear.) He had enjoyed to a very great extent the terse and capable remarks which Sir Algernon had delivered to them. Sir Algernon realised the necessity of the conservation of natural resources, and bringing forth from the soil the best results. Sir Algernon also added that it was hardly possible to estimate what the vast uncultivated domains under the control of this Empire were capable of producing. He (the speaker) hoped to touch upon that presently in the brief remarks which he proposed to make. Speaking as one occupying the position of the guest of the Chamber of Commerce there that day, he thought that the toast, that of the Dominions over the Seas, was not inappropriate—(Hear, hear)—

because Birmingham was, as they knew, one of the most important commercial and industrial centres in the whole of this country, and the development of the Empire beyond these shores was of vast importance to them. They did not fail to recognise that probably their greatest customers came from the people within their own boundaries there, and that their foreign trade was of great importance; but a careful study of the statistics published from time to time showed that, after all, in proportion to the number of people dwelling in different parts, their great customers were their own people over the seas. (Hear, hear.)

Some fifteen or sixteen years ago he was present at that great festival when they celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of "Victoria the Good," and many interesting speeches were delivered upon that occasion. He noted recently the great trade development of the Empire that had taken place since that time. He found that the increase of the trade of this country during those years mounted to 955 millions, and 555 millions of that were with their own people over the seas—(applause)—as against 400 millions with the rest of the world. Then the trade returns for last year showed that of the increased trade of $33\frac{1}{4}$ millions, $18\frac{3}{4}$ millions were done with their own people over seas, as against 15 millions with the whole of the rest of the world. (Applause.) And if they reduced that to the question of the trade per head of white people, they found it amounted to pounds as against the pence of the foreigner—and that was most important. (Hear, hear.) They were proud to belong to that Empire. (Cheers.) He represented the most remote portion of His Majesty's possessions, but that did not lessen their loyalty to the throne. (Applause.) The time had gone by when the people of the old order regarded the Colonies as undesirable excrescences. (Applause.)

The policy inculcated by Sir George Reid, and inaugurated by the great statesman representing that city, and who was honoured by being their representative—(applause)—was the new and better policy. As Sir George Reid stated that day, Mr. Chamberlain was the man who brought the Colonial Office

up to modern requirements. (Hear, hear.) He (Mr. Mackenzie) was sure that did not impinge in any way upon the question of party politics. (Hear, hear.) He represented New Zealand, and its development might be taken as a type of what was going on in all their overseas possessions. He had spent the whole of his life there, and therefore he could state that during the 55 years he had lived in that country he had seen it develop from an almost impenetratable forest with great swamps to what it was at the present time, enjoying a trade equal to what the entire British trade was a hundred years ago. (Hear, hear.) Then they went to Australia. Look what was going on there. In a paper he picked up the previous day he marked that the wealth of that Commonwealth amounted to thirteen hundred million pounds. Going to Canada, one would almost confound them by quoting the statistics of that great and important country.

At the present time they were having Parliamentary missionaries going forth. Lord Emmott sailed from their shores a few days ago. He was going to Canada, visiting Australia, and returning by the Cape. Now he thought that was a splendid idea. (Hear, hear.) Too long had we been governed by those who did not know the great possessions under their control. It was impossible for an individual or a Government properly to administer affairs if they were unaware of the trust that was under their control. When Lord Emmott and his party visited Canada and Australia—they probably knew now something of them—he was sure they were doing their best in the interests of the departments they were at present assisting to control; but few of them realised the great heritage that was theirs. In Canada and Australia they had an area equal to the whole of the United States of America and almost the whole of Europe added to it. He was eliminating from their possessions all they held in Asia, Africa, and the islands of the seas. They could judge from their experience of the past what might be the ultimate development of these two possessions he had alluded to. When the United States of America declared for themselves independence there was a population of two millions. At the beginning of last century there was a population of

four millions, with a trade of 31 millions. To-day the trade was 700 millions, with a population of 95 millions. At the present time Canada had $13\frac{1}{2}$ millions of population, and had ten times the trade the United States had a hundred years ago. Was it not to be assumed that those two countries would soon have the trade the United States had now? If that be so, then they had a country with double the population of the old land, and that would indicate in a small degree what was the great Empire to which they were all so proud to belong. (Hear, hear.) He was pleased to hear the remarks regarding the question of development, and also the remarks made at their meeting in the morning regarding their city. It was stated they had borrowed $18\frac{1}{4}$ millions of money, and it was bringing excellent returns. If these overseas Dominions of theirs were to develop, they could not wait until the accumulated profits of their industries enabled them to prosecute the necessary developments to the maintenance of our Empire if we were to hold our own against competing foreign countries of a similar nature. (Applause.)

The Dominions, therefore, came to this country and asked them to advance some of the accumulated wealth we had here. Yet when they approached us some of the leading newspapers said they were offenders of a serious order. Most of the money was spent, and realising interest returns equal and above what they required to pay to the British moneylender. They required, therefore, some of the surplus population we could offer to send, and some of the accumulated capital. When they lost men and women from this country they were not altogether disappearing from sight. They were merely missionaries of Empire. (Applause.) He was sure he was taking their time too much. ("No, no!") He would draw his remarks to a conclusion by saying that some two or three years ago Lord Rosebery, addressing some press representatives who came to this country as delegates, said: "I desire to give you a message that I wish to be delivered to our overseas friends. Tell them that the Old Country is true at heart. Tell them that so long as there is a pound to spend or a man to serve that pound will be spent and that

man will serve in the defence of the Empire. We believe the time has arrived when each particular part of these great Dominions should take individual responsibility in the question of defence." That message had not fallen on inattentive ears. Canada was considering the question; Australia had a fleet in being, and New Zealand was going to do her part. The next thing that occurred to one's mind was this—and it was a very important point—How long were they going to keep these varying interests in one consolidated whole? His own opinion was that we could not provide from the British Parliament what was necessary to meet the rising aspirations of these people. One was told they must not hurry the question. He did not want to hurry it; but they should not urge any unnecessary delay. He assumed it a high honour to be asked to reply to the toast of "His Majesty's Dominions." (Applause.)

THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

The Bishop of Birmingham, proposing "The Health of the President," said he was one of the very few present in that room not directly connected with commerce; he sometimes wished he were. (Laughter.) Mr. Jesse Collings was one who had been known all over the Empire for a great many years, but had only become known to him within a comparatively short space of time, but from him he had received just that kindness and courtesy one would expect to receive at his hands. (Applause.) What Mr. Collings had done for Birmingham, the services he had rendered to his own city, they knew as well as he did, and he did not think that that assemblage should disperse without recognising, so far as they could, by a hearty toast to him, that they were grateful to him for what he had done. (Hear, hear.) Might he, before Mr. Collings, say with regard to his honorary presidency of the Chamber of Commerce, that no one could be more interested in the true progress of the Chamber of Commerce than those engaged upon religious duties. After all, upon the nobility of the aspirations of their great Chamber of Commerce must depend, in a very large measure, the

happiness, the welfare, and the moral well-being of the people of their great city. (Hear, hear.) He honestly said that no one could wish it greater success than those responsible in any way for the moral advancement of the people. He was one of the few present that day not associated with commerce. It was an interesting fact that the last speaker came from New Zealand, and they had present in the Rector of Birmingham one who by relationship was associated with that Edward Gore Wakefield, who had a great deal to do with New Zealand, and with whom he (the Bishop) had a slight connection. (Hear, hear.) They were all glad to see an old friend and servant of Birmingham present in the shape of Dr. Jowett, and they three poor sheep amongst all the wolves with all their hearts drank to the Chamber of Commerce, and especially Mr. Jesse Collings. (Laughter and applause.)

MR. JESSE COLLINGS.

Mr. Jesse Collings responded, and said he thanked them very heartily for that toast. He was not going to inflict another speech upon them, only to say what great pleasure he had had in presiding over that meeting that day. In addition to the choice and eloquent speeches he had heard delivered, he had experienced great pleasure in meeting with so many old friends. (Hear, hear.) Old friends in English society happily were not lost by political differences. (Applause.) He was reminded of a saying of Dr. Johnson's, who said: "In life friends are often lost and found"; but an old friend could never be found, and Nature so provided that he could not easily be lost. That was the case with him. Old friends were just as warm as they used to be, in spite of party or political differences. That was the state of things to be found in no other country in the world. (Applause.) He had one more remark to make in addition to thanking his friend the Lord Bishop for his kind references, and that was in reference to Labour Exchanges. His friend, Mr. Sydney Buxton, had referred to Labour Exchanges and their activity, and he (Mr. Collings) would give him an example of it, upon which there was no copyright, and Mr. Buxton

could quote it on future occasions when he wished to illustrate the activity of Labour Exchanges. (Laughter.) The story was this: Some time ago a man fell into the canal, and he called to a man on the bank to pull him out, but the man said, "No, I am going to the Labour Exchange to get your berth." When he got to the Labour Exchange and asked for the drowning man's berth, the Labour Exchange said: "My friend, you are too late. The berth has been given to the man who pushed him in." (Loud laughter.) He thanked them very much for their toast.

A CIVIC RECEPTION.

The Lord Mayor of Birmingham (Lieut.-Col. Martineau) showed his interest in the Centenary celebrations by inviting a large number of members of the Chamber and their guests, and also a large number of principal citizens, to a reception in the Council House at 3-30 p.m. Owing to indisposition, the Lord Mayor was not able to be present in person, but the Lady Mayoress (Mrs. Martineau) attended, and received the guests in the Round Room of the Art Gallery. Tea was served in the Long Room of the Museum, and during the afternoon, while the visitors inspected the contents of the galleries, music was rendered by Mr. Alfred Woolley's band. The guests, who numbered about one thousand (including many ladies) were greatly interested by the Legros Loan Collection, and the new Natural History Museum also proved a popular centre of interest. Whilst there was no elaborate scheme of decoration, the approach from the Council House to the Round Room was tastefully dressed, and the broad staircase adorned with palms and orchids. Many congratulatory references were made by the guests, both as to the richness of the galleries in objects of exquisite art and also as to the generous hospitality of the Lord Mayor in signalling the Centenary commemoration by such a happy afternoon function.

THE BANQUET.

The Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., presided at the banquet, held at the Grand Hotel in the evening.

Supporting him at the high table were the Prime Minister (the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P.), the Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M.P., Sir Albert Spicer, Bart., M.P., the Bishop of Birmingham, Mr. Gilbert Barling (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham), Sir Algernon Firth, Bart., Ald. W. H. Bowater, Mr. R. A. Cooper, M.P., Mr. H. W. Sambidge (President of the Chamber), and Mr. H. C. Field. The attendance numbered 420.

THE KING.

The Right Hon. Jesse Collings, in proposing "The King," associated with the toast the Queen, Queen Alexandra, the Prince of Wales, and other members of the Royal Family. He hoped, he said, that His Majesty King George, as a loyal and constitutional monarch, would have a long reign over a loyal and devoted people. (Applause.)

The toast was loyally honoured.

"HIS MAJESTY'S MINISTERS."

The Right Hon. Jesse Collings then submitted the toast of "His Majesty's Ministers." He said: This is a great day for Birmingham, and, looking at the list of visitors, and more particularly at the list of speakers, I am reminded that I must be very short in my remarks. In addition to our distinguished guest, the Prime Minister—(Applause)—we have the Consular representatives of many foreign States, we have Agents-General from most of the Colonies, and we have the High Commissioners of the Dominion of Australia, and of New Zealand, and we have about 120 representatives of the Chambers of Commerce in various parts of the country.

My first duty is heartily to thank in your name the Prime Minister for kindly coming amongst us to-night. (Applause.) I go further, and thank him specially on my own behalf because he was good enough to say that one of the reasons that induced him to accept your invitation was out of friendship for me. (Applause.) That friendship began a quarter of a century ago, when

I was unseated in the borough of Ipswich. He defended me then, and although he could not keep my seat, yet he managed to convince the judges that I was in no way to blame. (Laughter and applause.) Under an absolute monarchy the responsibility and work of the advisers of the Crown are comparatively light, but under a constitutional monarchy, under which we live, the responsibilities are extremely heavy. The Prime Minister has to advise the King on all questions, big and small. It is true there are heads of Departments, but the Prime Minister is himself responsible for every act of the Government. The old saying, "Those who administer govern," is true in this case. But outsiders little know the work, the thought, the anxiety, and the responsibility that rest on the shoulders of the Prime Minister of this country in connection with the affairs of our great Empire. There are two things we may specially thank the Prime Minister for. The first is, that he has kept us out of war ; and the second, that he has sent us a good Bishop. (Applause.) Those who have studied the course of the war in the Near East have felt anxiety lest we should be involved in it. We are not yet out of the wood, but happily for this country the foreign policy of the nation is not made a party question. (Hear, hear.) Party is sunk in the desire for the national good, and Sir Edward Grey and Lord Lansdowne might be working side by side. Another thing we are happy to see is that we are at peace with every nation of the world.

Now the public are so apt to be carried away by big measures that they are apt to overlook those smaller measures that affect the country. Take the heads of the departments—for instance, the Board of Trade, you know what skill and what "come-at-ability" is exercised by the President of that Board ; and, as I have stated, the head of the Departments of the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey, has done wonderful work. But there are smaller measures which are for the benefit of the country. To name two out of many that I could mention there is the Patents Act, carried out by the Board of Trade, which affords great protection to the British manufacturer, and then, in social measures, there is that splendid bit of

legislation in 1908 called the Children's Act—(Hear, hear)—which does so much for the protection of children, who are to be future fathers and mothers of the nation. (Applause.)

Now we are anxious to hear the Prime Minister and the other speakers that follow. I could say much more, but I think it best to give the utmost time possible for the distinguished men who are down to address you. I, therefore, without further remarks, give you "His Majesty's Ministers," coupled with the name of the Prime Minister. (Loud applause.)

The toast was honoured with enthusiasm.

MR. ASQUITH'S SPEECH.

A PLAIN HINT TO TURKEY.

The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P., on rising to respond was greeted with much cheering. Hardly had the cheers subsided when a man shouted, "Why don't you deal fairly with the women?" "Get hold of that man" was the order given by the toastmaster, and the offender was at once removed.

Mr. Asquith said: Mr. Collings and Gentlemen,—The toast which you, sir, have just proposed, and which the company has drunk, is always received in every English gathering, without any discrimination or difference of opinion, whatever may be the political complexion of those who for the time being are called upon to discharge the duties of the Government. (Hear, hear.) And it is a great pleasure to me for the first time in my life—and I never expected to have the honour—to respond to this toast in Birmingham.* (Laughter and applause.) My friend the Chairman has said, and said with perfect truth, that, anxious as I should in any case have been to be present on such an interesting occasion

*NOTE.—The Prime Minister in making this statement apparently forgot that in 1907, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, he was the chief guest at the Annual Banquet of the Chamber and responded to the same toast—on that occasion also proposed by Mr. Collings.

as this, he many months ago now, with that friendly importunity of which he is so consummate a master—(laughter)—begged me to come, and I felt there was no alternative but to yield at once. Mr. Collings has said truly that he and I have been friends now for over a quarter of a century. (Hear, hear.) He has referred to my well-intentioned but unhappily ineffectual attempts at the beginning of our acquaintanceship to retain him as a member of the House of Commons. (Laughter.) Gentlemen, I regret, I believe more than he regretted it at the time, that better fortune did not attend what I still believe to have been a righteous cause. (Laughter.) But from that time to this, amidst all the revolutions and vicissitudes of politics, although we are not so often as I could wish in the same division lobby in the House of Commons—(laughter)—that friendship so formed has grown, and developed, and increased, and it was never warmer or stronger than it is to-day. (Applause.) Mr. Collings was telling me just now that it is sixty-three years since he came to Birmingham. Well, gentlemen, I believe there is not a Birmingham man here who won't agree with me that although he did not have the good fortune, which I daresay has been that of many whom I see, to be born in this great city, there never was a more successful case of free imports—(laughter and applause)—do not suppose that I am going to trench upon controversial ground—(laughter)—than when Mr. Collings left his native Devonshire and began a career which will always be associated with some of the most stirring memories in the history of this great community. (Hear, hear.) Gentlemen, the Chairman has referred—he could hardly have failed at this moment to refer—to the great anxieties which have oppressed the minds and exercised the judgment of those responsible for the government of this country now for the best part of a year in relation to the great issues of peace and war.

THE UNITED ACTION OF THE POWERS.

At this moment all our eyes are turned to the East of Europe, and the spectacle which confronts them is disheartening and even repellent. (Hear, hear.) On

the one hand we see the Balkan States, as a sequel to a war in which they fought side by side, drenching the territory which their united efforts set free from Turkish rule with one another's blood. On the other hand we see Turkey, with the ink not yet dry upon the Treaty of London, to which a few weeks ago she put her hand, we see Turkey advancing beyond the line to which she agreed, and endeavouring to take advantage of the differences between her late enemies to recover some part at least of what she has lost. Gentlemen, it is not unnatural that the opinion of Europe should be profoundly moved—(Hear, hear)—and should demand of those with whom in the last resort resides power, and the responsibility which accompanies power, that they should show their readiness and their ability to bring to an end this sombre chapter in European history. (Hear, hear.) So far as Great Britain is concerned, having, as we have had from first to last no special interests of our own to serve, we have laboured unceasingly, and I think I may say not without success—(Hear, hear)—to promote and to preserve the united action of the Great Powers. The concert among them has been loyally maintained, and I say this with full assurance, that I honestly believe it was never less in jeopardy than it is to-day. (“Hear, hear,” and applause.) When a fair calculation is made of the interests, historic, economic, racial, religious, that have hung in the balance, the continued preservation not only of peace but of mutual confidence, and of a corporate policy, has been and is of the first moment. (Hear, hear.) Gentlemen, in the pursuit of that common object the Powers, while limiting as far as possible their direct intervention, have achieved two notable and practical results. In the first place, they have kept, and they will continue to keep, in their own hands, the delimitation of the frontiers of Albania and the destination of the *Ægean* Islands. In the next place, it was under their auspices that the terms of peace between the belligerents which were embodied in the Treaty of London were concluded, that the Enos-Midia line, which is to bound the European territory of Turkey was laid down—(Hear, hear)—and they have already appointed their expert representatives to trace its actual course.

(Hear, hear.) Subject to these reservations they did not in the first instance concern themselves with the partition and distribution between the Balkan States of the territory, the conquered territory, outside that line. They trusted, as all Europe and all the world trusted, this would be found to be a matter for mutual and friendly agreement between the parties directly concerned. That hope, gentlemen, has been frustrated. There has been during these last weeks a deplorable and wanton effusion of blood. (Hear, hear.)

A CONFERENCE LIKELY.

A State, not before directly interested, Roumania, has intervened. The Powers have done, and they are doing, everything that they can to bring the disputants into peaceful conference. To-day it seems likely that such a conference may take place. We hope, and I think I might go further and say we believe, that it may result in an immediate suspension of arms and in speedy terms of settlement—(applause)—upon which, however, let me add, in view of what has happened, the great Powers must and will reserve their own judgment. (“Hear, hear,” and applause.) As regards Turkey, we ourselves here in Great Britain, and I believe all the Powers, were disposed, on the basis of the recently-concluded treaty, to regard as accepted facts her retention of her European territory within the lines laid down, and, subject to reasonable safeguards for good government, the integrity of her Asiatic empire, and we were ready and anxious to give her such assistance as we could in the prosecution of the heavy tasks which still lay upon her. If, and I wish to be perfectly explicit upon this point, if Turkey is ill-advised enough to set the provisions of that treaty at nought she must be prepared—I will say no more at present—she must be prepared for the opening up of questions which it is by no means in her interests to bring into debate. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I have said so much, and I think you will agree it was impossible for me not—(hear, hear)—at such a moment as this to make perfectly plain, not only here but to Europe, what is the position of His Majesty’s Government and the people of the United

Kingdom. (Applause.) I have said so much upon a topic which, upon an occasion like this, one would naturally have preferred to avoid. Let me come to the pleasanter subjects which are associated with your celebration to-night. We are met to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. I see in this room the representatives of other Chambers of Commerce in various parts of the United Kingdom, but I believe that one fairly claims for Birmingham a primacy in this matter—she was the pioneer. She was the first city—the first town as she was then—to establish that now familiar institution the Chamber of Commerce. She set an example which has been widely followed. And may I not say—I speak in the presence of many who are better qualified than I am—looking at this now developed system of Chambers of Commerce, that the objects which they have in view, the functions which they perform to the great benefit of the whole community, is first to organise in each district its local industries and commercial interests, next the collection and diffusion of information relating to them, further co-operation with similar bodies in other commercial and industrial centres, and finally, but by no means the least important of all, the acting as an authoritative intermediary between the commercial community and the Government and Legislature of the day. All those functions, which I take to be the duties of Chambers of Commerce in general—all those functions have been admirably performed in Birmingham. From 1813 to 1913—it is a wide span in the history of mankind and of the industrial development of England—and in that development there are few communities which have taken a more active and fruitful part than Birmingham. (Hear, hear.) Your Chamber was founded in 1813, at a time of great stress, when we were at war both on the Continent and in America, when the means of communication as we know them to-day were still in their infancy, and when most of the great discoveries which have revolutionised modern industry were still to be. I am told that the population of Birmingham in 1813 was something over 80,000. I have been informed on the highest authority since I have been here to-night

that—not probably without the annexation of districts which did not form part of Birmingham of that day—(laughter)—the population now exceeds 800,000—in other words it has multiplied by ten. You know better than I do how during that time Birmingham in her central position has not only shared but has led in many of the great industrial movements of the last one hundred years. (Hear, hear.) I suppose there is no place in the United Kingdom where the field of industry is so varied as here. (Applause.)

THE GROWTH OF COMMERCE.

And may I just note two other figures. The total volume of exports of British produce and manufactures in the year 1813, when your Chamber was founded, is estimated as being something like 43 millions; and last year the corresponding figure was 487 millions—(applause)—that is an increase of 1,000 per cent. Gentlemen, we are perhaps too apt—I speak with very great caution, because an ex-Chancellor is here, and we have to meet in another place, and he has to follow me—I tell you frankly I would much prefer to follow him—(laughter)—we are apt—I am sure I shall have his agreement—when we deal with figures like these, when we realise the stupendous progress that has been made in the course of the century, both in the trade of the United Kingdom as a whole and in the particular interests of a district like this, we are apt to indulge in complacent optimism, and although I do not want to do what used to be done in Egypt in the old days—to bring a skeleton round the table to damp the spirits of the guests—yet there are two facts in relation to industrial development which ought to give us pause. The first is the condition of the industry of agriculture. (Hear, hear.) Now, agriculture in 1813, when we were still in the dawn, and only in the dawn, of the mechanical age, was not only what it still remains, the greatest industry, it was the overwhelming and preponderant industry of the country. In one shape or another it still employs the vast bulk of our population. It is a commonplace to say that all that has been changed,

and one of the most disquieting features of our industrial development has been the decline, I won't say of agriculture as an industry, but the decline in the attractiveness of agriculture for our industrial population. There is upon this a tendency to exaggerate. For instance, we are often told that we are now practically dependent for our food upon outside sources of supply. That is very partially true, and the figures are very curious and very significant, but if you take the total figures—I agree it is a matter of conjecture—but if you take the best estimate that you can form of the consumption of food by the people of this country, and if you exclude, as you ought to, from that commodities of tropical origin like tea and sugar, and confine your observations to articles of food which can be grown in this country, although the overwhelming proportion of wheat comes from over the sea, considerably more than half is grown upon the soil here. I do not say it is not satisfactory, but it is a fact that ought to be borne in mind.

CONDITION OF AGRICULTURE.

Then, gentlemen, I think there is often a considerable amount of exaggeration as to our agriculture itself; I mean as to the manner in which it is carried on. I do not believe that farming was ever carried on upon a better and more scientific system than it is to-day. (Hear, hear.) Nor do I believe that capital cannot and will not be attracted to it. But when you have made all allowances for that, not even the most optimistic observer can contend that, either in the quantity or in the variety of our output, is the most being made of the productive resources of this country. (Hear, hear.) What is the remedy? I am not going—otherwise I should embark upon a shoreless sea, though a very tempestuous one—I am not going to enlarge upon, and still less to compare, the various suggestions that are put forward. But I want, and I should like, and I believe I can carry this great and representative audience with me when I say that the end to be aimed at in any remedies that are proposed is two-fold. It is in the first place to attract, to

retain of course, but to attract our rural population to remain upon the land. (Applause.) The process of migration and emigration which has done so much to denude British agriculture of that on which, after all, it mainly depends—the thews and sinews of the labourer—that process ought to be arrested—(Hear, hear)—and next, and here again I think you will agree with me, it is surely our business as a nation to devise some means of developing both in amount, in quality, and in kind, the whole total of our agricultural production. (Hear, hear.) Those are the touchstones, gentlemen, by which I think any scheme—concrete and specific scheme—for what is called land reform that is put forward, those are the touchstones by which it ought to be tested. If they tend to produce one or the other, or if they above all tend to produce both of those two results, they ought to commend themselves without distinction of party to everyone who has the best interests of his country at heart. (Applause.) If on the other hand they tend directly or indirectly, I won't say to frustrate, but not to foster, those two governing points, they ought, again without distinction of party, to be regarded with suspicion and mistrust. (Applause.) I am, I am afraid you will think, in a rather croaking mood. But I must go on to say one final word upon the other disquieting feature, as I think, in our industrial situation; and that relates not to agriculture, but to the great industries that are carried on in towns and cities and districts such as this. The development there, of course, has been stupendous and unparalleled.

THE PROBLEM OF INDUSTRY.

But are we sure, and here again I ask that question of you as practical men—not as politicians, but as practical men—are you sure that we are making the most of our resources both in men, in materials, in mechanism? Is there not still visible almost everywhere over the whole field of our productive industry a certain slowness in the acceptance and the utilisation of new modes of production, of new processes of industry, and, above all, of advanced methods for, what I may

call, marketing our goods both at home and abroad? (Applause.) That, gentlemen, brings me to the problem—still unsolved—of industrial education, which, after all the time and all the money we have spent upon it, is still in the forefront, in my opinion, in point of urgency and of national interest. (Hear, hear.) You have here in Birmingham not only the Chamber of Commerce whose Centenary we are commemorating to-night, but you have a great, admirably equipped, modern University, I venture to urge upon you the importance of allying the energies and efforts of the two. There is, as everybody who has examined it must admit, an enormous waste in our existing industrial system both in what is sought and what is not sought to be taught and to be learned, and I do not believe from the point of view of the industrial future of the United Kingdom there is a problem more worthy of the public spirit, of the intelligent co-operation of men of business, and of men of culture, than to see if you can—and nowhere better than in Birmingham can the experiment be made—combine together all the resources of mechanical invention and of commercial experience with those for advancing the scientific knowledge which your great University is so well qualified to bestow. (Applause.) Gentlemen, I thank you heartily for the kindness of your reception to-night. I have spoken to you about serious things, but things which, I think you will agree, are germane and proper on such an occasion as this. (Hear, hear.) And to those of us who are engaged—like my right honourable friend and myself—month by month and year by year, in the turmoil of political controversy, who are obliged to differ from convictions equally honestly entertained and equally zealously prosecuted, both upon the one side and upon the other, who are obliged to differ upon many of the questions which affect the form of our government and the development of our institutions, it is a great satisfaction to be able to meet at a table like this, face to face, with the representative men of British industry, to find that we are at one in our honest endeavour, for the success of which we rely upon you, not only to maintain, but to improve and to advance, the industrial supremacy of the country

which we all love, and to which we are all devoted. (Applause.) It is in that spirit that I have accepted your invitation, and have come here to-night, and I assure you that in the anxieties, which are ceaseless, and in the weariness which from time to time besets those who are engaged in the arduous and responsible task of administering the government of the country, there is nothing which relieves those anxieties so much, or which solaces that weariness so effectually, as the knowledge that they can always rely upon the appreciation, sympathy, and confidence of their fellow-countrymen. (Loud applause.)

Mr. Asquith then resumed his seat, having spoken thirty-five minutes.

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

Rising to propose the toast of "The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce," Mr. Austen Chamberlain had a great reception. He said: The Prime Minister affected very pleasantly a certain apprehension because it fell to my task to follow him here, as it has sometimes fallen to my task to follow him elsewhere. Gentlemen, you have heard the Prime Minister and I put it to you, Don't you think that I am right when I say that, if I sometimes rise with fear to take the punishment that will follow when I speak before him, I have much more reason for regretting the harshness of fate when I have to follow him? But it has made it in one sense easy for me to do so to-night, for I think my first words must be—and they are words gladly spoken—of cordial response to the closing sentences of his speech, in which he spoke of the common objects which unite us instead of our differences as to means, and of the mutual respect which is the outcome of sustained and often sharp conflict in the House of Commons. And let me say, gentlemen, that to me, no less than to the Prime Minister, it is a great pleasure when an occasion like this presents itself, on which he and I can sit on the same side of one table, instead of being divided, often very usefully and prudently divided—(laughter)—by that substantial piece of furniture. And

let me say more. The Prime Minister has shown us in the speech which he has delivered to-night how much all Englishmen have in common. We are accustomed to devote the greater portion of our time, I think not alone in public life—perhaps some of you would recognise that it happens in domestic circles also—we are accustomed to devote the larger portion of our time to subjects on which we differ. Yet, after all, subjects on which we agree, perhaps, fill a bigger page in our family or our national history, and are certainly not less important than those over which we wrangle. The Prime Minister has made to-night a declaration of the first importance as to the views of his Majesty's Government on the lamentable spectacle all the world has watched with regret, and something more than regret, passing before its eyes in the Balkans in the last few weeks.

UNITY IN FOREIGN POLICY.

Let me say, and I think I can say it for the party with which I act, for my friends in the House of Commons no less than for myself, that we recognise the great service which the Foreign Secretary has rendered to his country and to Europe. (Applause.) My friends will welcome when they read it to-morrow, as we have welcomed it to-night, the declaration which the Prime Minister has made—(applause)—and that all the world may know that whatever the sharpness of our domestic controversies, however profound the issues which divide us, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary speak in the name of a united kingdom when they take part in the counsels of Europe. (Applause.) And may I go one step further and say that being by heredity an optimist, I cherish the hope that not many years will elapse when all questions of Imperial concern will be treated with the same absence of party spirit—(Hear, hear)—and the same desire to strengthen the hands of the Imperial Government which now prevails in matters of foreign policy—(Hear, hear)—and I am encouraged the more to hope so because I observe that even when the Prime Minister thought he was treading upon the most delicate ground no Tariff Reformer would

have challenged anything that he said. (Laughter.) In the graceful tribute which he paid to your Honorary President, Mr. Collings, he spoke of him as an early importation into Birmingham, and one of which we are all proud. (Hear, hear.) He was perfectly right in saying that, put in that way, no Birmingham man, to whatever party his allegiance, objects to free imports of that quality. (Laughter.) Let me assure you, Mr. Asquith, that we are never more happy than when we receive the raw material—(laughter and applause)—and have perhaps the pleasure, may I add the profit, of working up the finished article—(Hear, hear)—for export to Westminster or elsewhere. (Laughter and applause.) I feel, gentlemen, that, after all, the Prime Minister and I are perhaps more nearly in agreement on these questions than we sometimes suppose. (Laughter.) I assure him he cannot send us too many imports of raw material, and we cannot send elsewhere too many of the products of our industry and our skill. (Hear, hear.)

THE FEATURES OF BIRMINGHAM.

Birmingham has always welcomed visitors and still more residents within its bounds, and much of our Birmingham history has been made by men who were not Birmingham born. That is one of the qualities which I think has helped to make our city what it is. And another is that circumstance alluded to by the Prime Minister, that our industries have been all extraordinarily varied, and let me add, extraordinarily varied not only in the surface which they cover, but in the factories, in the workshops in which they were carried on. We have been in the main a city of small men. We have had few, very few, overshadowing forces in the past; we have had very few very large concerns. And I think that not a little of the success of the development of our municipal life, of the harmony which in the main has characterised our industrial relations, of the absence of jealousy and of envy, of which we must gratefully, I think, take note, has been due to the fact that in our city there was every grade of employers, every step of the ladder was there,

and not one rung was missing, from the smallest man who worked with his own workmen up to the biggest firm in the city. I am afraid that the tendency of our commercial development is unavoidably but regrettably changing that state of things. I can only hope that in spite of the change the employers of Birmingham, the new generation which is rising up, will cultivate those personal and friendly relations with the workmen employed at their works which—although I was never a Birmingham manufacturer—from seeing many examples in my own family, I know to have been the characteristic of Birmingham trade and industry in the past. (Applause.) I am sure those words of warning addressed to us by the Prime Minister will be taken to heart by this great audience. I share at once in the optimism and apprehension which he expressed. I have no fear for our future if we recognise frankly the difficulties with which we are faced. Our only danger is lest we should overlook them, or having seen them, disregard them. But I think there are questions which present new difficulties for a great industrial centre like ourselves, situated in the heart of England. In these days seaborne commerce plays so large a part alike in bringing us the material on which our skill and industry is to be employed, and in taking our products to the markets where they may be sold. And I am not without hope that the Prime Minister—having been induced by his friendship for Mr. Jesse Collings to visit the Midland metropolis—will have heard something of a question which interests us here. This is not without its difficulties—heaven forbid that an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer should for a moment say it—but is of vital importance to the future of the great inland communities built upon the manufacturing basis. I mean the question of the use and ownership of the great waterways of this country. (Applause.) I am quite certain that in the short time that the Prime Minister spends among us the Hon. President and the President of this Chamber will have poured into either ear some account of our hopes and aspirations, and will send him back to London refreshed and invigorated with the thought that we do think of some things besides Home Rule or Welsh

disestablishment, or even about the Parliament Act—that there are other matters, subjects of no controversy between party and party, and which Ministers may usefully and profitably devote their attention to, and in pursuing which they will have the hearty goodwill of men of all parties and men of no party. (Hear, hear.)

THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURE.

The Prime Minister touched not only upon industry, but upon agriculture. The agricultural problem is one which is exercising the minds of all thinking men, for upon it depends, in a large degree at least, the race of men that we are to breed in this country, and the fortunes of the country in the future. (Applause.) We shall hope to see from one side or the other—from both sides, I should say—suggestions put forward for dealing with that problem in the spirit in which he dealt with it to-night, with the obvious desire not to pull someone down, but to raise someone up. (Applause.) And measures proposed in that spirit, from whatever quarter they come, will be sure of sympathetic attentions alike in the House of Commons and in the country. (Hear, hear.) The Prime Minister made a speech in which not for one moment did he trench upon contentious subjects—not wilfully. (Laughter.) But shall I step beyond the line if I venture to say that I thought the bases for his statistics about the extent to which we are dependent for articles which we could produce upon foreign production was vitiated in one small particular? I am not hopeful that we can grow tea in Birmingham, or even in the neighbourhood—(laughter)—but why, Mr. Prime Minister, why exclude sugar? (Hear, hear.) With a little additional encouragement—I would say even with merely a guarantee for the continuance of present conditions—surely we might produce in this country, with infinite benefit to the agricultural population—because of the amount of labour that it involves and the time at which it requires the labour, because of the high cultivation it requires, and the improvement in the soil which is treated to it, and because of the indirect effect which it has upon the pro-

duction of another and yet more important staple of food namely, wheat—surely with a little encouragement, and even a little security, we might do a great deal towards producing in this country a large portion of the sugar which we require. (Applause.) But I feel that I am getting on to thin ice, and I had better get off it as soon as possible. (Laughter.) I do no more than hint at delicate questions of that kind, for I am a party politician, and party politicians must not make party speeches at non-party gatherings. (Hear, hear.) I leave the matter, therefore, to the President of the Chamber, whose health I have the honour to couple with the toast which I propose, without further elaboration of this question. (Laughter.) He is not a party man; no suspicion will attend his words or his actions, and he can say all that I feel yet am restrained from giving utterance to. I give you the toast of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, coupled with the name of the President. Long may he live, and long may the Chamber flourish. (Applause.)

MR. H. W. SAMBIDGE.

Mr. H. W. Sambidge, President of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, in responding, said it was a great privilege to be called upon to respond for the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce upon such an important and unique occasion. It was the intention to hold the commemoration banquet at the City Hall, and to invite ladies to participate in the celebration, but, unfortunately, a small section of the fair sex paid a marked attention to the Prime Minister, and it was therefore thought advisable to hold the banquet at that hotel. (Laughter.) He associated himself with what Mr. Jesse Collings had said regarding the presence of Mr. Asquith. There were also present, he continued, representatives from many Chambers of Commerce. The Birmingham Chamber had received unlimited hospitality from various Chambers in the country, and they were therefore glad of the opportunity of returning some of that hospitality, though in a limited degree. The pronouncement of the Prime Minister and the remarks of Mr. Austen Chamberlain had raised

the proceedings to a very high standard indeed. He (the speaker), however, wished to speak as a Chamber of Commerce man.

A great deal had been said in regard to matters appertaining to the Birmingham Chamber, and it was now to the future that they looked to for the development of the work of Chambers of Commerce, and particularly of the Birmingham Chamber. From the Centenary proceedings they had every inducement to go forward with renewed efforts, and on their hundredth birthday they found themselves in a vigorous and healthy condition, and ready for future useful work. If the necessity existed 100 years ago for a Chamber of Commerce—if in 1813 the necessity existed of forming a body to watch over and foster and develop trade—surely in 1913 that necessity must be very much greater. In 1813 he took it that there was little foreign competition; they had things practically all their own way. Now, a different condition of things existed, and their difficulties were not likely to lessen. The enormous changes in the world's industrial development, the great difficulty of modern trade, the peculiarity of tariffs, combined with the ever-increasing competition of foreign rivals, made it imperative that no means should be neglected to look after their trade interests, and that combined action was absolutely necessary to obtain proper results. They had to use their combined efforts to bring pressure on the Government of the day to give more time, if possible, to trade affairs, even if that should necessitate less time being given to the consideration of other subjects; they had to be active in opposing certain legislation and bring pressure to bear upon the passing of beneficial legislation—those were a few of the matters that came under the purview of the Chamber of Commerce, and it showed the necessity of supporting the work of the Chambers of Commerce.

There was a tendency for trade interests to be overlooked and sacrificed in the turmoil of party politics. He spoke in a strictly non-party sense. They knew of no party politics inside the Chamber, their work being in quite a different direction, and his remarks applied equally to both parties. Other nations were

standing behind their traders, and rightly so; and as business men we in England looked to our nation to do the same. It used to be said that trade followed the flag, but now it could be said that the flag had to follow trade. The Birmingham Chamber hoped to make a fresh start. At present their membership was approaching 2,000, and included the leading merchants and manufacturers in the city, and during the past twelve months there had been a rapid increase in membership. He thought that business firms were beginning to realise the advantages of the work of the Chamber of Commerce, and he appealed to every business and professional man in the city to join the Chamber. Their work was in the interests and for the benefit of all, and therefore should be supported. Every citizen, directly or indirectly, obtained benefits as a result of the Chamber's work; and was it not selfish for any tradesman to stand outside? As an institution of the city, they claimed a high position in regard to length of service. They had been established and had a good record for work many years before the City Council came into being, and a large amount of the money spent by the municipality was in a great measure supplied by the traders of the city. He suggested that the municipality should advance to the Chamber a sum of money which would probably be expended with great possible advantage. He also suggested that there should be greater co-operation between the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce, and there were many ways in which that could be done.

It was pleasant to hear the remarks about the Chamber, and the reply from the King was certainly gratifying. It was an encouragement to know that their work was appreciated, and he assured them that they should proceed with and still further that work. The Prime Minister had referred to the very important question of commercial education. There was a Faculty of Commerce in the Birmingham University, with Professor Ashley as the head of the department, and he was a member of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber had given a good deal of consideration

to the question, and had established a scholarship for the furthering of the idea. He thanked them for the way in which they had received the toast.

SIR ALBERT SPICER.

Sir Albert Spicer said he had been honoured by being entrusted with the very important toast of "The City of Birmingham." He took it that he was asked to occupy that position because he had had some connection with Chambers of Commerce for a great many years, but he dared say that those who put his name down for that toast perhaps were not aware of the fact that he had been a ratepayer in Birmingham for the last 35 years—(Hear, hear)—and therefore he had had an opportunity of watching to some extent the growth and development of that great city. There were two features in connection with that growth and development that had always struck him, namely, the courage and the enterprise of their municipal authority, coupled with the generous help of some of their great Birmingham citizens. During the period to which he had referred he had seen the town of Birmingham by royal charter raised to the dignity of a city. He had seen their Mayor by letters patent created a Lord Mayor. He had seen their great enterprise of bringing water from the Welsh hills, seventy miles away, carried through successfully. He had seen the gas supply taken over by the municipality, and worked so successfully that large amounts had been paid in the profits of that enterprise to the relief of the rates. He had seen the municipality take over the electric lighting and the tramways, and he had seen a constant growth in their open spaces—(Hear, hear)—where again the generosity of private donors to a grateful municipality had been very apparent. But a foremost feature that had always impressed itself upon his mind in connection with Birmingham had been the growth and advancement in her policy of education. (Hear, hear.) Whether they looked at the elementary system, the secondary, the technical—both municipal and private—or their

University, they had seen constant growth and development, and, might he say, that having had the honour of being invited after his recent visit to Australia to address the Commercial Faculty of the Birmingham University, he had an opportunity of looking somewhat closely into the development of that faculty. He ventured to say, without hesitation, that the work of that Commercial Faculty was going to be felt very strongly in the future development of Birmingham. (Applause.)

Then again, in connection with their Art Galleries and Museums, their Art Gallery Purchase Fund and the school for acquiring knowledge of art, there was a happy blending of the two forces to which he had referred. Through that period Birmingham had shown an alertness to supply opportunities for thorough knowledge and enlightenment, and it was through the adoption of that very policy of efficiency that Birmingham gave such rich promise for the future. As stage by stage with great material advancement she went forward she appeared determined to produce and train men who were able to rely upon themselves. (Hear, hear.) In view of those facts he had the greatest possible pleasure in presenting to them the toast of "The City of Birmingham." He was originally asked to couple the toast with the name of their honoured Lord Mayor, one of an old Birmingham family who had rendered such invaluable services to the city in many different ways, but he was unable to be there that night through indisposition. He (Sir Albert Spicer) therefore had pleasure in coupling with that toast the name of Alderman Bowater, the Deputy Lord Mayor, who was so well-known and so well liked by every section of that great community—a man universally popular, who united with a great fund of humour so much tact and so much diplomacy that he (Sir Albert Spicer) was told he had often pulled the City of Birmingham out of tight and difficult situations. (Applause.)

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR.

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Alderman W. H. Bowater) responded to the toast. He was sorry, he said, to hear the announcement just made by the President that he need not cut short his speech, because there was an extension of an hour. He had been laying the flattering unction to his soul all through the dinner that his few remarks would come very late, and he had a little speech ready, beginning "At this late hour." (Laughter.) There was an old Chinese proverb which said, "Happy are the makers of short speeches: they will be asked to come again." (Laughter.) As he would like to be asked to come again at the next Centenary—(laughter)—he did not think, in spite of the promise of the President, he would speak for more than a minute or two. In responding for the city, all present would share with him regret that the Lord Mayor was not present to perform the duty himself. Personally he felt that the toast had already been responded to. It had been proposed twice, because the city was so industrial that when they proposed the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce they were proposing the city. (Hear, hear.) The ratepayer who proposed the toast—(laughter)—and he was sure Sir Albert Spicer paid his rates willingly, which was more than all present could say—enumerated several directions in which the municipal authority of Birmingham had in the past directed its efforts, or was likely in the future to do so, but he omitted one of their schemes, an ideal they had lately adopted, namely, that of Town Planning. Birmingham was the first city to have a more or less complete scheme to submit to the Government Department for their approval. They led the way to the country in that direction. (Hear, hear.) It was fitting to say a word or two of that because, had the citizens of one hundred years ago had the dimmest idea of this subject, they would have saved a great amount of expense and trouble to-day. As he had said that morning at the Town Hall, one hundred years ago there were only 125 streets in Birmingham, and now there were 636 miles of streets. The original 125 were so crooked and so narrow, and the houses were so badly built that they had cost much more than the 636 miles of to-day would

cost their successors. The work was under the very able direction of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, and they wanted so to plan their suburbs that those who came after them would not grumble at the narrow and awkwardly laid out streets. (Hear, hear.)

There was one point made by Mr. Austen Chamberlain he would like to emphasize, and that was in regard to canals. This was a matter for the future. He would like to ask the members of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce to give as much attention and interest as they could to this subject. He was sure they would soon be enthusiastic, and soon realise that it would make for the commercial and general prosperity of the whole country, as well as of Birmingham, which was to be at the centre of the canal cross, about which so much had been heard. He wanted all the members of the Chamber to be crusaders fighting for the canal cross. They had approached the Government. But they did not seem to have a warm welcome—at any rate, the Department did not seem to think as much of them as Mr. Asquith seemed to think that night. (Laughter.) It was a small matter—he believed it was about £14,000,000 they asked the Government for—and when Mr. Sambidge asked for £5,000 from the municipality he was surprised at the moderation of the request. The municipality did not mind asking the Government for a grant from the National Exchequer. They spent as much of rates as they could pretty well get hold of, and having come almost to the end of the purse of the ratepayers, they looked to the Government to assist them, and talked of national services they might pay for. The Government told them in reply, “Well, if we do, it comes out of the pockets of the citizens in taxes as well as rates.” There was a good deal in that remark, they would admit, and he would only say to Mr. Sambidge: “If you cannot pay your own way as a Chamber of Commerce, if you get £5,000 from the City Council, you will have to pay it as rates.”

In conclusion, he congratulated the Chamber of Commerce upon the happy thought of holding that splendid gathering. The chief attraction was to have the pleasure and honour of hearing the distinguished

guests that the officers of the Chamber had invited. They had indeed been treated that day to some brilliant orations, chief of all of which was Mr. Asquith's. (Applause.) He did not know whether Mr. Asquith felt a little bit "out of sorts" coming there. For a minute or two he had tried to be unnatural—he tried to be a pessimist—but he could not do it. All who had studied Mr. Asquith's public career knew that he was above all else a breezy optimist. He believed, indeed, that the Prime Minister was the man quoted as the type of the true optimist. A pessimist was a man who of two evils chose both. (Laughter.) But the optimist was the man who, falling out of the top window of a twenty-storey building, said, when he had come down sixteen or seventeen storeys: "I am all right up to now." (Laughter.) What he had said, he added, had been said sincerely. He did not want anyone to think that whatever Birmingham could or could not do about producing sugar that they could produce soft soap. He thanked Sir Albert Spicer for the very kind way in which he proposed the toast, and all present for the heartiness with which it was received. (Applause.)

MR. H. C. FIELD.

Mr. H. C. Field proposed "Our Guests," coupled with the name of Mr. R. A. Cooper, M.P. He said he could not carry his memory back to the beginning of the Chamber, but he could go very nearly half-way in what he might, perhaps, call an indirect connection with it. In 1867 he accompanied his father, who was then Chairman of the Chamber, when he was deputed to visit the Boards of Trade in America on the subject of the immunity of property from capture on the high seas. That day they had reason to be proud that some of the most eminent and some of the busiest men in the country had gathered together to wish them well. Their presence showed that they recognised the growing importance of Chambers of Commerce. (Applause.)

MR. R. A. COOPER, M.P.

Mr. R. A. Cooper, M.P., responded, and said that when he looked round at the guests assembled at that table that evening, including as they did the chief amongst them, the Prime Minister—(applause)—he realised what a responsibility had fallen upon him in responding to that toast. They had listened that evening to many brilliant speeches, delivered by distinguished men, and they had listened with especial interest and pleasure to the great speech delivered by the Prime Minister. (Hear, hear.) They had with them that evening many members of Parliament, many distinguished administrators, men learned in the law and science, successful men of commerce, and men of distinction in various paths in life, and when he remembered that his task that night was to thank the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce for according to that great and brilliant throng the privileges of taking part in this unique function, he felt that the duty might have been placed in very much abler hands. Might he take the opportunity of saying, as one who was born just outside the boundaries of their great city, that while the presence of the Prime Minister was regarded as being a great honour conferred upon the City of Birmingham, speaking for the districts around, he said that the people in the surrounding neighbourhood took it as a compliment which the Prime Minister had also paid to them. (Applause.) His earnest wish was that long might the city and its Chamber of Commerce flourish together. (Hear, hear.) Long might Birmingham maintain her position in the van of civic progress (Cheers.) There were signs that forces were at work, and that the energies of the members of the Chamber of Commerce had started a movement in that city, which was destined to make life less ugly, and in the words of William Morris, lessen “the heavy trouble and bewildering care that weighs us down, who have to earn our daily bread”—(applause)—a movement which would make them forget the fact of six counties overhung with smoke, and constantly press towards the ideal of a fuller and more beautiful life. (Hear, hear.) Long might Birmingham continue to set

that proud example, and long might the Chamber of Commerce take her share in maintaining the supremacy of the city in industry, commerce, and civic ideals. (Applause.)

THE BISHOP.

The Bishop of Birmingham proposed the toast of "The President." He hoped, he said, that when those present reached the age of Mr. Jesse Collings they would be able to do their work as well as he did it that day. He hoped also that Mr. Asquith and Mr. Austen Chamberlain might still be in the House of Commons at the age of eighty-two, possibly seated on the same side, and, at any rate, having as much vigour as Mr. Collings had that night. He thought the sight of a veteran working for a great city should be an inspiration to young men to rally to their city. (Applause.)

MR. JESSE COLLINGS.

In reply, Mr. Jesse Collings said he had taken great pleasure in the functions of that day. It has been a red-letter day for Birmingham, and he had never listened to speeches of higher tone or more patriotic character, and more imperially conceived than those he had listened to that day.

The gathering then broke up.

CENTENARY COMMEMORATION FUND.

LIST OF DONORS.

Accles and Pollack, Ltd.
Achurch, J. P.
Albright, W. A.
Allday and Onions, Ltd.
Amery, L. S., M.P.
Ansell, Joseph.
Ansell's Brewery, Ltd.
Ansell, Jones and Co.
Ash, Joseph, and Son.
Ashby, Frank, and Co.
Ashford, J., and Sons, Ltd.
Avery, W. and T., Ltd.

Barker and Allen, Ltd.
Barrows' Stores.
Barwells, Ltd.
Bass, Ratcliff, and Gretton, Ltd.
Bassett, Bagnall, and Co.
Batchelor and Co., Ltd.
Bayliss, E. H.
Bayliss, T. R.
Becks, A. T., and Co.
Belliss and Morcom, Ltd.
Benton and Stone, Ltd.
Best, R. H.
Birmingham Small Arms Co., Ltd.
Birmingham Daily Post (Proprietors of).
Birmingham and Midland Society of Incorporated
Accountants.
Birmingham Metal and Munitions Co., Ltd.
Birmingham Railway Carriage and Wagon Co., Ltd.
Bland, Thomas, and Sons.
Bond, A. E. (J. C. Abbott and Co., Ltd.).
Bowen and Edwards.

Bragg, C. B., and Co.
Broadway, J. E.
Brooks, J. B., and Co., Ltd.
Burman, R. H.
Cadbury Bros., Ltd.
Cadby Bros., Ltd.
Caldicott and Hudson.
Canning, W., and Co.
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. J., M.P.
Chance and Hunt, Ltd.
Charlton and Long.
Cheshire, Edward.
Collings, The Rt. Hon. Jesse, M.P.
Collins, Christopher, Ltd.
Cooper, A. H. (Wm. Cooper and Goode, Ltd.).
Cope, Allman, and Co., Ltd.
Cotton, B. M., and Co.
Crane, Fredk., Chemical Co., Ltd.
Daniell, S. A., Ltd.
Deeley, John.
Delta Metal Co., Ltd.
Dennison Watch Case Co.
Dobson and Crowther, Ltd.
Dugard Bros.
Dunn, Martin.
Dussault, Chovil, and Sons.
Earle, Bourne, and Co., Ltd.
Edwards, S. A., and Co., Ltd.
Everitt, Allen, and Sons, Ltd.
Evered and Co., Ltd.
Eveson, G. J.
Field, H. C.
Freeman, W. Marshall.
General Electric Co., Ltd.
Gibson, James.
Gibson, A. H., Ltd.
Gilbert, Joseph, and Sons.
Ginder, W. J.
Gittings, Hills, and Boothby, Ltd.

Goodman, George, Ltd.
Goodman, F. B.
Gotscher and Co.
Gottschalek, G., and Co.
Grand Hotel, Ltd.
Griffiths, Keeling, and Sherwood.
Grove, G. F.
Grove, James, and Sons.
Handley, Edwin, and Sons.
Harris and Sheldon, Ltd.
Harris, D. T. (D. B. Harris and Sons, Ltd.).
Harrison and Co.
Haseler, Frank.
Heath, Samuel, and Sons, Ltd.
Heathcote and Coleman.
Heaton and Dugard, Ltd.
Hill, Wilfred.
Hill, J. W. G.
Hinks, James, and Son, Ltd.
Hinks, Wells, and Co.
Hiorth, L. T. H.
Holder's Brewery, Ltd.
Hoskins and Sewell, Ltd.
Hudson and Son.
Hughes, G. H.
Impey, R. L., Cudworth, Lakin-Smith, and Goode.
Johnstone, G. H., and Co., Ltd.
Kannreuther, E. H.
Keay, E. C. and J., Ltd.
Keep Bros., Ltd.
Kemp, A., and Son.
Kenrick and Jefferson, Ltd.
King, W. A.
King's Norton Metal Co., Ltd.
Lander and Larsson.
Leonardt, D., and Co.
Lewis Bros.
Lindner and Co., Ltd.
Lloyds Bank, Ltd.

Lloyd, Richard, and Co.
Lowe, S. S.
Lowe, Sir Francis, M.P.
Lowe, Bevan, and Co.
Lucas, Joseph, Ltd.
Mantle, J., and Sons, Ltd.
Mapstone, M.
Maxwell, Robert W.
McBean, T., and Co.
McDougall, James, Ltd.
McKechnie Bros.
Mellor, J. Firth.
Menke, C. T. (Messrs. Hill, Menke, and Co.)
Metropolitan Bank (of England and Wales), Ltd.
Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon, and Finance Co., Ltd.,
and Messrs. Docker Bros., Ltd.
Milward, Henry, and Sons, Ltd.
Mitchell, A. B.
Mitchells and Butlers, Ltd.
Mitchell, William (Pens), Ltd.
Moffat, James, and Sons.
Mole, Robt., and Sons.
Morland and Impey, Ltd.
Morton and Crowder, Ltd.
Mountford, Fredk. (Birmingham), Ltd.
Muller, H. L., and Co.
Muntz, Sir Gerard A., Bart.
Murcott, A., and Co.
Myers, M., and Sons.
New Delaville Spelter Co., Ltd.
New Inverted Incandescent Gas Lamp Co., Ltd.
Newton, Shakespeare, and Co., Ltd.
Newman, Wm., and Sons, Ltd.
Page, William, and Co., Ltd.
Palethorpes, Ltd.
Parkes, A. and F., and Co., Ltd.
Parkes, E., M.P.
Parsons, C. H., Ltd.
Parkinson and W. and B. Cowan, Ltd.
Patent Axle Box and Foundry Co., Ltd.

Payton, A. H.
Pearce, William, Ltd.
Periam, H. W., Ltd.
Perry and Co., Ltd.
Peterson, Th. W., and Co., Ltd.
Peyton and Peyton, Ltd.
Phillips, Albert, Ltd.
Phillips, J. A., and Co., Ltd.
Piggott, Thos., and Co., Ltd.
Pinsent, R. A.

Rabone Bros. and Co.
Rabone, J., and Sons, Ltd.
Rainsford and Lynes, Ltd.
Rathbone, F.
Reading, N. C.
Rowbotham, T.
Rudge-Whitworth, Ltd.

Salter, George, and Co.
Sambidge, H. W.
Sanders, Thos., Ltd.
Sawers, Ltd.
Schürhoff, Hermann.
Scott, Adolph.
Setten and Durward.
Sharp, Parsons, and Co.
Shipway, George.
Silk and Terry.
Simmons, Bernard R.
Smallwood and Sons.
Smith and Wright, Ltd.
Smith, Stone, and Knight, Ltd.
Smith, John, Ltd.
Smith, William (Thomas Smith and Sons, of Saltley,
Ltd.)
Southall Brothers and Barclay, Ltd.
Spicer, James, and Sons, Ltd.
Spital and Clark.
Stampings Alliance, Ltd.
Stevens, Ernest, Ltd.
Stevens, John, Ltd.

Stewarts and Lloyds, Ltd.
Stock, Sons, and Taylor, Ltd.
Story, D.
Suckling, William, and Sons.
Sun Cycle and Fittings Co., Ltd.
Swan, Edward.
Tangyes, Ltd.
Taylor, Charles (Birmingham), Ltd.
Taylor, J. S.
Taylor, Samuel, and Co.
Terry, Herbert, and Sons.
Thompson, B. and S. H., Ltd.
Thursfield, C. J., and Co., Ltd.
Tonks, Ltd.
Tunbridge, W. S.
Turner, G.
United Counties Bank, Ltd.
Vaughan, Septimus, Ltd.
Veritys, Ltd.
Vonberg, E.
Walford, John S.
Walker, Joseph.
Walls, Ltd.
Wathen, W. H., and Co.
Weiss, Bros. (Successors), Ltd.
Weldless Steel Tube Co., Ltd.
Whitehouse, William, and Co., Ltd.
Whitehouse Bros., Ltd.
Whitehouse, E., and Son.
Wilkinson and Riddell, Ltd.
Whitfield, Allan.
Whitfield, James.
Wilkins, T. B., Ltd.
Williams, J. Barton.
Wilson, Carter, and Pearson, Ltd.
Winfield's Rolling Mills, Ltd.
Wingrove, H. Kerry.
Wood Carving Co., Ltd.
Worrall, Herbert O., and Co., Ltd.
Wright, Bindley, and Gell, Ltd.
Yates, John, and Co., Ltd.

APPENDIX A.

BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.
COMMITTEE, 1813.

Thomas Attwood.
George Attwood.
T. H. Attwood.
David Blair.
Anthony Baldwin.
Jn. Biddle.
Wm. Blakeway.
T. W. Crompton.
Benjamin Cooke.
Wm. Chance, Jun.
W. W. Capper.
Andrew Collins.
Richard Cadbury.
Th. Dickinson.
Wm. Frears.
Saml. Galton.
S. T. Galton.
Jas. Goddington.
T. L. Hawkes.
P. M. James.
Owen Johnson.
Jn. Ryland (Edgbaston St.)
Jn. Robinson.
Jn. Ryland, Jun.
Jn. Rotton.
Richard Spooner.
Tim Smith.
Josh. Scholefield.
Thos. Small.
Isaac Spooner, Jun.
Charles Lloyd.
J. T. Lawrence.
Josh. Ledsam.
Saml. Lloyd.
James Lloyd.

John Mabson.
Thos. Messenger.
Josh. Moore.
Thos. Osler.
Richard Payton.
Thos. Phipson.
Wm. Patten.
T. Pemberton (Livery St.)
Henry Perkins.
James Pearson.
T. Pemberton (Snow Hill).
Thos. Potts.
Wm. Phipson.
Thos. Ryland.
Th. Ryland (Lower Temple St.)
Wm. Redfern.
Wm. Shorthouse.
Mark Sanders.
Saml. Smith.
Jn. Turner.
Wm. Walker.
Josh. Webster.
Josh. Willmoore.
Simon Walker.
George Yates.

APPENDIX B.

BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.
COUNCIL, 1913.

HON. PRESIDENT :

The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.

HON. VICE-PRESIDENTS :

The Lord Mayor.

The Mayors of Smethwick and West Bromwich.

The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.

Viscount Lewisham, M.P.

Sir Francis W. Lowe, M.P.

Evelyn Cecil, M.P.

A. D. Steel-Maitland, M.P.

L. S. Amery, M.P.

J. T. Middlemore, M.P.

Ebenezer Parkes, M.P.

The Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce at
Coventry, Dudley, Kidderminster, North Staffs.,
Walsall, Wolverhampton, Worcester.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL :

The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.

Ebenezer Parkes, M.P.

Professor W. J. Ashley.

The Chairman Birmingham Jewellers' and Silversmiths'
Association.

The President Birmingham Midland Society of Chartered
Accountants.

The President Birmingham and Midland Society of
Incorporated Accountants.

F. B. Goodman, J.P.

J. S. Taylor (Vice-President).

H. Lakin-Smith.

R. W. Chase.

C. Playfair.
W. H. Bowater.
R. A. Pinsent.
W. Marshall Freeman.
A. T. Cocking, J.P., F.C.S.
J. Firth Mellor.

ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL :

H. W. Sambidge, J.P. (President).
J. P. Achurch.
Thos. H. Ash, J.P.
T. A. Bayliss.
A. E. Bond.
Kenneth R. Davis.
W. Deakin.
G. H. Dugard.
J. W. Earle.
H. W. Edmunds.
R. G. Evered.
H. C. Field, J.P.
A. H. Gibson.
Ed. H. Green.
Frank Haseler.
Stanley Johnstone.
E. H. Kannreuther.
E. C. Keay, J.P.
A. B. Mitchell.
Sir Gerard A. Muntz, Bart.
Richard Parkes.
Hermann Schüroff.
George Shipway, J.P.
Justus Fr. Sjögren.
J. Martyn Smith.
Bernard Steeley.
W. S. Tunbridge.
George Turner.
Thomas Turner.
E. A. Wilson.

APPENDIX C.

BIRMINGHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

OFFICERS SINCE 1813.

1813.—Chairman	(Provisional): Richard Spooner;	Deputy Chairman;	Joseph Webster;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1813.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Thos. Lakin Hawkes;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1814.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Thos. Lakin Hawkes;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1815.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Thos. Lakin Hawkes;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1816.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1817.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1818.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1819.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1820.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1821.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	
1822.—Chairman:	Saml. Tertius Galton;	Deputy Chairman:	Timothy Smith;
Treasurer:	Paul Moon James;	Secretary: James Pearson.	

- 1823.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1824.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1825.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1826.—Chairman: William Phipson; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1827.—Chairman: William Phipson; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1828.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1829.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1830.—Chairman: Saml. Tertius Galton; Deputy Chairman: Timothy Smith; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1831.—Chairman: Timothy Smith; Deputy Chairman: Oliver Mason; Treasurer: Paul Moon James; Secretary: James Pearson.
- 1855.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-Presidents: S. Buckley, S. S. Lloyd; Treasurer: J. D. Goodman; Secretaries: W. L. Gilbert, Henry Howell.
- 1856.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: S. S. Lloyd; Treasurer: J. D. Goodman; Secretary: Henry Howell.
- 1857.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: J. D. Goodman; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: Henry Howell.

- 1858.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: George Downing; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: Henry Howell.
- 1859.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-Presidents: Charles Sturge, Henry Van Wart; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: Henry Howell.
- 1860.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: Arthur Ryland; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: Henry Howell.
- 1861.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: George Dixon; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: Henry Howell.
- 1862.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: George Dixon; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretaries: Henry Howell, ———, Jenkins.
- 1863.—President: R. Spooner, M.P.; Vice-President: J. S. Wright; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: ———, Jenkins.
- 1864.—Presidents: R. Spooner, M.P., Wm. Scholefield, M.P.; Vice-President: J. S. Wright; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretaries: ———, Jenkins, H. J. Harding.
- 1865.—President: Wm. Scholefield, M.P.; Vice-President: J. S. Wright; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1866.—President: Wm. Scholefield, M.P.; Chairman: J. S. Wright; Vice-Chairman: Alfred Field; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1867.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Alfred Field; Vice-Chairman: Edward Peyton; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1868.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Alfred Field; Vice-Chairman: Edward Peyton; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1869.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Thomas Lloyd; Vice-Chairman: C. D. Sturge; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1870.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Thomas Lloyd; Vice-Chairman: C. D. Sturge; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.

- 1871.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: C. S. Hawkes; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1872.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: C. S. Hawkes; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1873.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Ralph Heaton; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1874.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Ralph Heaton; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1875.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: John S. Wright; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1876.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: John S. Wright; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1877.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: John S. Wright; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1878.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: *Vacant*; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1879.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: *Vacant*; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: H. J. Harding.
- 1880.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: *Vacant*; Vice-Chairman: S. Booth;
 Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1881.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: Samuel Booth; Vice-Chairman: C. D.
 Sturge; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1882.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: C. D. Sturge; Vice-Chairman: Henry
 W. Elliott; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.

- 1883.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: Henry W. Elliott; Vice-Chairman: J. P. Turner; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1884.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: H. L. Muller; Vice-Chairman: J. P. Turner; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1885.—President: Philip Hy. Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: H. L. Muller; Vice-Chairman: J. P. Turner; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1886.—President: George Dixon, M.P.; Chairman: Henry W. Elliott; Vice-Chairman: Ralph Heaton; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1887.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: Henry W. Elliott; Vice-Chairman: Ralph Heaton; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1888.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: Ralph Heaton; Vice-Chairman: J. William Tonks; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1889.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: Henry W. Elliott; Vice-Chairman: J. William Tonks; Treasurer: Thomas Lloyd; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1890.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: J. William Tonks; Vice-Chairman: Wm. Barwell; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1891.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: J. William Tonks; Vice-Chairman: Wm. Barwell; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1892.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: R. P. Yates; Vice-Chairman: T. J. Walsh; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1893.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: R. P. Yates; Vice-Chairman: T. J. Walsh; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1894.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: R. P. Yates; Vice-Chairman: J. B. Chantrell; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.
- 1895.—President: P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman: T. J. Walsh; Vice-Chairman: J. B. Chantrell; Treasurer: W. N. Whitehead; Secretary: W. F. Haydon.

OFFICERS SINCE 1813—*continued*.

- 1896.—President : P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman : T. J. Walsh; Vice-Chairman : J. B. Chantrill; Treasurer : W. N. Whitehead; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1897.—President : P. Albert Muntz, M.P.; Chairman : T. J. Walsh; Vice-Chairman : J. B. Chantrill; Treasurer : W. N. Whitehead; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1898.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : W. N. Whitehead; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1899.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : W. N. Whitehead; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1900.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : W. N. Whitehead; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1901.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretary : W. F. Haydon.
- 1902.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretaries : W. F. Haydon, G. Henry Wright.
- 1903.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Vice-Chairman : H. C. Field; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretary : G. Henry Wright.
- 1904.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretary : G. Henry Wright.
- 1905.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman : F. B. Goodman; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretary : G. Henry Wright.
- 1906.—President : The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman : J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman : H. W. Sambidge; Treasurer : A. B. Mitchell; Secretary : G. Henry Wright.

- 1907.—President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman: J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman: H. W. Sambidge; Treasurer: Samuel Allen; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1908.—President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman: J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman: H. W. Sambidge; Treasurer: Samuel Allen; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1909.—President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; Chairman: J. S. Taylor; Vice-Chairman: H. W. Sambidge; Treasurer: Samuel Allen; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1910.—Hon. President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; President: J. S. Taylor; Vice-President: H. W. Sambidge; Treasurer: Samuel Allen; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1911.—Hon. President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; President: H. W. Sambidge; Vice-President: J. S. Taylor; Treasurer: Samuel Allen; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1912.—Hon. President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; President: H. W. Sambidge; Vice-President: J. S. Taylor; Treasurer: George Shipway; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
- 1913.—Hon. President: The Rt. Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P.; President: H. W. Sambidge; Vice-President: J. S. Taylor; Treasurer: George Shipway; Secretary: G. Henry Wright.
-

INDEX.

Address to H.M. The King	13, 516, 596
Africa, British Trade with	362, 378, 399
Alcohol for Industrial Purposes	455
Alien Immigration	373
America (United States of), Certificates of Value issued by Chamber	505
America (United States of), Control of Canadian Trade	548
America (United States of), Customs' Tariff	258, 348
America (United States of), Shipping Proposals	462
America (United States of), Sequestration of British Property	64
America (United States of), Treaty with	238
American States (Independent), Recognition of	91
America (South), Trade with	65, 395
American Trusts	420
Apprenticeship, Law of	60
Argentine Customs' Tariff	493
Arms, Government Orders for	92
Artisans, Emigration of	88
Australia, Importation of Guns into	495
Australian Commerce, Trade Descriptions	489
Austria-Hungary, Commercial Treaty with	206, 212
Austria-Hungary, Customs' Tariff	179, 193, 201, 276, 293, 407, 442
Bank Charter Act	127, 139, 144, 207, 501
Bank Rate	206
Banking Companies, Joint Stock	150
Bankruptcy Law	141, 148, 160, 172, 176, 190, 195, 204, 210, 218, 225, 241, 244, 252, 265, 270, 279, 282, 481, 513, 578
Beads (British), Duties on	86
Belgium, Customs' Tariff	138
Bills of Sale	257, 262, 319
Bimetallism	130, 276, 279, 283, 291, 295, 301, 314, 322, 336, 350, 360
Birmingham, Ancient	5
Birmingham, Modern (Early Period)	9
Birmingham, Greater Birmingham Scheme	533
Bits and Stirrups, Etc., Wrought v. Cast Iron	66
Board of Trade, Commercial Intelligence	396, 512
Bonded Warehouses	168, 243
Bounties on Exports	23
Brass and Copper, Supply of	22
Brazil, Relations with	202
Brazil, Customs' Regulations	412
British Association	194
British Empire Trade Mark	582
British Property, Confiscation of in European Wars	41, 106
Budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer's	334, 530, 549, 563, 579, 586
Bulgaria, Customs' Tariff	455

INDEX—continued.

Canada and United States, Reciprocity Treaty	253
Canada, Customs' Tariff	276
Canadian Manufacturers, Visit of	466
Canada, Preferential Tariff	369
Canada, Postal Rates on Newspapers, Magazines, etc. ..	432, 437, 448, 459
Canadian Cattle, Embargo on	453
Canals 254, 267, 328, 330, 337, 341, 350, 390, 416 468, 478, 492, 534, 551, 570, 576, 584	
Canal Rates	232, 374
Canals, Rent for Use of Towing Paths	236
Cape Colony, Taxes on Joint Stock Companies ..	407, 410, 448, 449
Carriers' (Inland Water) Liabilities	43
Catalogues, Customs' Duties on in Colonies	451, 490
Centenary of the Chamber	590
Chamber, Members of Committee (Year 1813)	675
Chamber, Members of Council (Year 1913)	677
Chamber, Officers since 1813	679
Chamber, Membership of the	584
Chamber of Commerce Established	49
Chamber of Commerce, Reorganisation and Incorporation of ..	417, 427, 436
Chambers of Commerce, <i>Locus Standi</i> before Parliamentary Com- mittees	303
Chambers of Commerce, Status of	447, 460
Chambers of Commerce, Association of, Established	163
Chambers of Commerce, Association of (<i>vide</i> Commencement of each Chapter since year 1860)	
Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, Federation and Congresses of 320, 324, 356, 359, 389, 412, 437, 471, 580	
Chamberlain, Mr. Joseph	178, 189, 435
Cheques, Law as to Crossed	266
China, Trade with	103, 109
China, Customs' Tariff	217
China, Weights and Measures	505
Chinese Tools, Exhibition of	324
Clock, need for a Public	234
Coal Mines (Eight Hours') Bill	344, 502
Coal Supplies	420
Commerce, Minister of 259, 276, 294, 300, 358, 463	
Colonies, Appointment of Commercial Agents in	476
Colonial Prime Minister, Visit of a	509, 563
Commerce, Tribunals of 202, 237, 246	
Commercial Committee formed	11
Commercial Society, Establishment of	38
Commercial Policy 77, 80, 82, 85, 87, 165, 302	
Commercial Organisation	488
Commercial Treaties 47, 271, 346	
Company Laws 291, 382, 469	
Consols, Transfer of	135
Congo, Trade Conditions 300, 305, 423, 434, 436	
Co-operative Societies and Income Tax	532, 585
Copper Coinage, Supply of	127, 164
Copyright Law (<i>see also</i> Designs)	161
Corn Laws 62, 73, 93, 97, 121	
Corporation Purchase of Gas Works and Water Works	254

INDEX—continued.

County Courts	215, 396
Cuba, Trade with	361, 374, 399, 418, 433, 438
Currency (<i>vide</i> Bimetallism and Monetary System)	397
Customs' Fines, Foreign	397
Debtors, Imprisonment of	245, 253, 286, 297, 494, 512, 559
Debtors, Law as to Arrest of	109
Debtors (Insolvent), Law as to	85
Debts, Assignment and Mortgaging of	359, 366, 388, 417
Debts, Recovery of	80
Depression, Commercial	77, 95, 116, 117, 120, 144, 307
Designs, Law Relating to Copyright of	161, 173, 175, 182, 459, 471, 485
Designs, Registration of in Germany	438
Dominions, Royal Commission	580
Education, Commercial	403, 409
Education, Technical	220
Electric Light, Charges for	508, 528
Exhibition of Commercial Samples	367, 395, 396
Excise Laws	16, 23, 24
Factory Legislation	70, 76, 215, 245, 246, 260, 381, 493, 508, 521, 536, 551
Fair Trade (<i>see also</i> Commercial Policy)	319, 328
Federation of Commercial Societies	25, 46
Financial Stress, Loan from Bank of England	94
Fire Arms' (Scotland and Ireland) Bill	509, 530
Firms, Registration of	136, 149, 253
Food and Drugs, Law as to	226
France, Commercial Relations with	25, 169, 177, 242, 248, 266
France, Customs' Tariff	169, 281, 347, 354, 400, 527
France, Hall-marks on Gold and Silver	510
Free Trade (<i>see also</i> Corn Laws)	90, 137, 273, 284, 369
Garbett, Samuel, Charges Against	27, 29, 31 <i>et seq.</i>
Gas, Charges for	507, 528
Gauges, Wire and Metal	274, 276, 278, 283, 292, 298, 388
Germany, Customs' Tariff	177, 179, 201, 276, 421
Government Contracts	151, 329
Government Manufactures	194, 199
Grammar School	424
Guide to Birmingham, Publication of	581
Guns, Efficiency of English Proof	477
Guns, Tax on	234
Gun Trade, Condition of	414
Holland, Customs' Tariff	193
Imperial Conference	349
Imperial Federation	316, 366
Imperial Trade	342, 349, 359, 366, 369, 384, 443, 580
Income Tax	126, 132, 165, 429, 438, 494, 499, 530, 549, 551, 563, 577, 579, 586

INDEX—continued.

Index	686
India, East India Company's Charter	107
India, Income Tax in	349
India, Trade with	102, 109
India, Importation of Guns into	490
Indies (East and West), Trade with	101
Industrial Property, Protection of by International Treaties, etc.	235
Inhabited House Duty	585
Ireland, Commercial Relations with	18, 24
Ireland, Home Rule	325
Italy, Customs' Tariff	179, 186, 202
Italy, Obstacles to Trade with	39, 111
Japan, Treaty with	289
Japan, Customs' Tariff	547
Journal (Monthly), Publication of	429, 436
Labour Conciliation and Arbitration	242, 361
Labour Exchanges, Establishment of	483, 520
Legislation, Commercial	285, 292, 296, 302, 320, 326, 332, 337, 344, 353, 359, 370, 373, 381, 388, 393, 398, 403, 410, 418, 437, 461, 472, 489, 502, 516, 537, 553, 571, 588
Life Assurance Companies	233
Livingstone, Dr., Visit of	143
Local Expenditure	501, 581
London and India Dock Company's Bill	454
London, Port of, Import and Export Rates	537
London, Port of, Through Rates	576
Machinery, Exportation of	88, 99
Machinery, Rating of	269, 349, 410
Manchester Ship Canal	299, 304, 307
Manufactories, Inspection of by Visitors	22, 68
Madagascar	391
Manufactures, Legislative Interference with	82
Marine Store Dealers	147, 173, 176
Matches, Tax on	236
Membership Campaign	57
Mercantile Law Amendment	137
Merchandise Marks, International Arrangement	514
Merchandise Marks' Act Amendment	456, 519, 536
Metals, Prices of and Duty upon	91
Metal, Thefts of	147, 239, 546
Midland Institute	406
Mint, the Royal, Coinage for Foreign Governments	234
Monetary System (<i>see also</i> Bimetallism)	116, 117, 119, 126, 127, 134
National Insurance against Sickness, etc.	487, 554, 568, 572
Natal, Taxes on Joint Stock Companies	448, 449
National Expenditure	484, 501
Naval Defence	370
Netherlands, Customs' Tariff	455
New Zealand, Income Tax	385
New Zealand, Taxes on Joint Stock Companies	449

INDEX—continued.

Old Age Pensions	504
Panama, Trade with	507
Paris, Universal Exhibition	205, 214
Parliamentary Elections	313, 412
Partnership, Law as to	135, 181, 184, 192, 196, 220
Patents, International Convention	411
Patent Laws	115, 182, 185, 191, 260, 266, 270, 272, 284, 291, 292, 296, 453, 480
Patent Office Arrangements	269
Percussion Cap Experiments	227
Poor Laws, Royal Commission on	483
Politics	14, 112, 120
Porto Rico, Trade with	361, 374, 413
Portugal, Customs' Tariff	223, 274, 280, 333, 455, 546
Postal Rates, Inter-Imperial	437
Postal Reform	304, 349
Post Office Money Orders	262, 270, 278
Preface	3
Proof House	67
Railway Amalgamations, Agreements, etc.	164, 167, 241, 256, 473, 491, 529, 550, 569, 579, 584
Railway and Canal Traffic Commission	278
Railway Classification	470, 473
Railway Deliveries, Restrictions	215
Railway Laws	222, 247, 303, 306, 320, 327, 332
Railway Nationalization	257
Railway Policy	473
Railways, Powers of Board of Trade	499, 515, 535, 550, 569, 584
Railway Rates and Charges	158, 200, 206, 232, 238, 271, 287, 294, 335, 338, 344, 354, 440, 447, 450, 458, 464, 473, 531, 564, 570, 574, 587
Railway Rates, Owners' Risk	430, 440, 450, 473, 487, 511, 531, 549
Railway Passengers' Luggage	414, 426
Railway Strike	565
Railway Train Services	390, 396
Railway Warehouses	242
Rates, Local	117, 581
Rates, Local, Direct Payment of	501
Reform Bill	114
Retail Trades' Conference	549
Roumania, Commercial Treaty with	280
Roumania, Customs' Tariff	321, 377, 442, 455
Russia, Customs' Tariff	213, 223, 294, 315, 334, 442
Sarawak	151, 157
Scotland, Bankruptcy Law of	58
Seducing Manufacturers and Workers to Emigrate	15, 22
Servia, Commercial Treaty with	280
Shipping Delays	38
Shipping Freights	454, 470

INDEX—continued.

Shipping Rings	491, 535
Shop Hours	513, 529, 577
Siam, Trade with	378
Sierra Leone, Trade with	406
Silver Wares, Duty on	23
Slave Trade	150
South African Customs' Tariff	468
Spain, Attitude of in <i>re</i> European War	44
Spain, Customs' Tariff	188, 274, 280, 293, 298, 315, 321, 355, 386, 480
Stamp Duties	69, 101, 166
Stolen Goods, Legislation as to	551
Suez Canal	140, 230, 299
Sugar, Australian Grown	229
Sugar Duty	87, 201
Sugar Bounties	328, 399, 408
Sweden, Customs' Tariff	192, 547
Switzerland, Customs' Tariff	452, 455
Sword Blades, Quality of	27, 29, 30
Taylor, Mr. J. S., Complimentary Dinner to	561
Taxation, Imperial and Local	264, 273
Taxation of Manufactures	15, 24
Taxes on Commercial Travellers	469, 535
Telegrams, International Vocabulary for Code	423
Telegraphic Addresses	313
Telegraphic Money Orders	241
Telegraph Service	155, 222, 253, 386
Telephone Service	386, 403, 564
Telephone Rates	506
Telephones' and Telegraphs' Advisory Committee	583
Tibet, Trade with	318
Tools, Export of	17, 21, 27, 88
Trade, Impediments to	17, 496, 500
Trade Marks, Action of Patent Office	445
Trade Marks, Rules and Fees	264, 478
Trade Marks, Fraudulent Imitation and Piracy of	156, 514, 562
Trade Marks, Registration of	166, 175, 203, 205, 211, 220, 226, 231, 235, 245, 254, 259
Trade, State of (<i>vide</i> end of each Chapter from year 1868 to year 1901)	
Trade Unions and Strikes	221, 229
Trustee Investments	391
Turkey, Customs' Tariff	297
Turkish Parliamentary Visit	531
Uganda, Retention of	362
University of Birmingham	398, 406, 425, 486, 498
Usury Laws	75
Vienna, Artizans Visit to Exhibition at	249
War, Capture of Private Property in time of	205, 211, 226, 408, 556
Weights and Measures, Law as to	343

INDEX—*continued.*

Weights and Measures, Metric and Decimal System—

187, 274, 329, 352, 371, 383, 393,
399, 402, 410, 435, 437, 497

Window Tax	69
Workmen's Compensation and Employers' Liability	333
Writs of Extents in Aid	74
Writs, Prohibition Bill	187
Year Book, Publication of	483

